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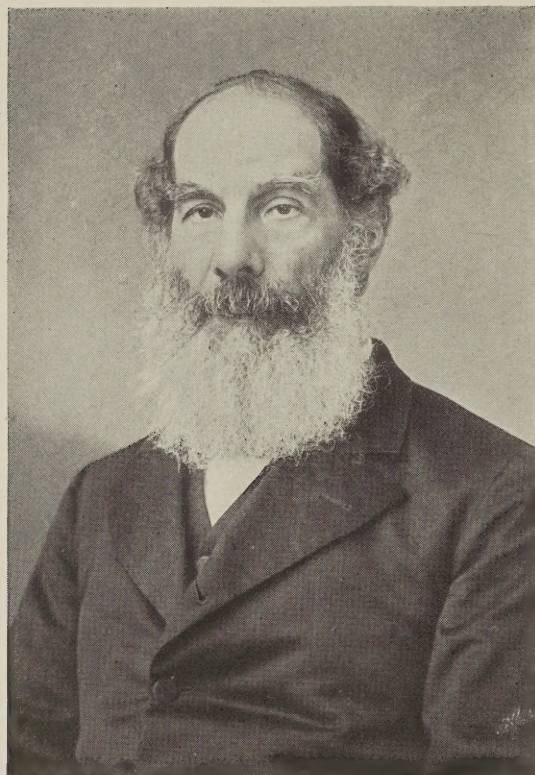


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SABATO MORAIS, LL.D.

# ITALIAN HEBREW LITERATURE

BY

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SABATO MORAIS, LL.D.

EDITED BY

JULIUS H. GREENSTONE

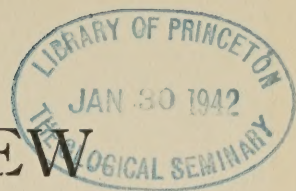
WITH A FOREWORD BY

HENRY S. MORAIS

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## FOREWORD.

את חטאי אני מזכיר היום:

“My sins I recall this day” (Genesis xli, 9)

This was the confession of the culpably forgetful chief of the butlers before Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. My confession is not due to forgetfulness: for the thought of my sainted father's writings has been travelling through my mind all these long years. On Thursday, November 11, 1897, that beloved soul, after nearly half a century of continuous and untiring service as a messenger of Almighty God, was called to the sphere where only the highest and noblest can dwell, leaving Israel the poorer, for the loss of a servant tried and true. In accordance with specific directions left by my father, selections were to be made from his multifarious works—both in manuscript and in print—and prepared, after careful editing, for permanent publication. As his older son, with some experience in literary work, my father appointed me to the task of editing his writings, subject to the approval of my older sister, Nina Morais Cohen, and her husband, Emanuel Cohen. Both of these have since departed. Untoward circumstances in the ministerial profession which I had adopted prevented me from gratifying my ardent hope and prayer, though I had all but firmly resolved to publish nothing of my own writings, until my blessed father's works had seen complete publication.

Time and again I had been urged by friends, that, if I still found myself unable to do the work, I should place it in the hands of others, competent and experienced, who would fulfill the requirements, subject to my approval. Hence, Dr. Cyrus Adler, who for many years was a pupil of my father, and knew him as a student would know his master, and Dr. Julius H. Greenstone, who, likewise, was a student in the Jewish Theological Seminary, during the period of

my father's presidency, kindly volunteered to assume the arduous task, and help on, at the very least, the publication of a first volume, from my father's pen.

The present book is, therefore, the first product; the subject being selected, after the result of conferences, and as one upon which comparatively little has been given to the reading and thinking world. My father's sphere of writing however, was vast and varied, embracing Religion, Theology, Doctrines, Politics, Hebrew Literature, Jewish History (on which subjects alone, upwards of sixty lectures have been written, covering a period from Ezra and Nehemiah, to considerably past the Expulsion from Spain), articles and poems in the Hebrew language, in Italian (my father's native tongue), Polemics, Translations, and a great variety of what might be termed Miscellaneous. All these, it is hoped, will, with a favorable reception accorded to the present volume, see the light of publication: and, if at all possible, under the same auspices. Such is my ardent wish.

Let the legion who have benefitted by my father's continuous and unflagging ministrations, the innumerable pupils and the students to whom he gave his best and choicest time and knowledge, come forth and show their appreciation of such a master as few can boast, of such a man as is seldom found in the pulpit, rare in the domain of learning, but, above all, worthy of that grand description given by the prophet Malachi (ii, 7):

כי שפתי כהן ישמרו דעת ותורה יבקשו מפיהו, כי מלאך ה' צבאות הוא:

"For the priest's lips shall contain knowledge, and the Law they shall seek from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts."

HENRY S. MORAIS.

New York, June 1, 1926



## PREFACE

More than a quarter of a century has passed since the death of the author of the present volume and his influence is still felt not only in the community in which he labored for the greater part of his life, but also among all who came in contact with him. His personality stands out most vividly before those who knew him, his zeal in behalf of his religion and his devotion to Jewish learning still stir to action those who were privileged to sit at his feet and profit by his teachings. Their number is indeed increasing as time goes on and the dynamic influence of his towering personality manifests itself in the works that they have produced and in the institutions that they have created and fostered as a result of the impetus given by his teachings and by his example. His memory will for ever be enshrined in the Jewish Theological Seminary, the institution which he called into existence and to the growth of which he devoted all his energies during the latter part of his life. Sabato Morais needs no other memorial.

Yet, it was felt that the world should not be deprived of the products of his fertile intellect. In his modesty, Dr. Morais refrained from publishing his writings during his life time. Outside of a number of contributions to periodicals, his works remained in manuscript, in the possession of his family. His son, the Rev. Henry S. Morais, placed the manuscripts at my disposal some time ago, with the request that I undertake the editing of them. The selection of the material for the present volume, including essays pertaining to the life and literature of the Jews of Italy—Dr. Morais' ever-beloved native land—was made with the assistance of two of his pupils, Dr. Solomon Solis Cohen and Dr. Cyrus Adler. It was thought that this volume would be a distinct contribution to Jewish scholarship, since very little has been produced in the English language on the subjects treated. In many cases, the author has added some personal, intimate touches, which add so much more interest and vividness to the sub-

ject. Many of these were originally prepared for delivery from the platform and later appeared in Jewish periodicals, notably the *Jewish Messenger* of New York and the *Jewish Record* of Philadelphia. The manner in which the data were collected and arranged and the charming style in which the articles are couched give them permanent value and interest. It was deemed advisable to include in this volume the translation of S. D. Luzzatto's Introduction to the Pentateuch—a work that has not lost its value even after more than half a century of Biblical study and investigation. The translator's notes tend to clarify it and to make it more useful to the student.

The one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Dr. Morais, which was celebrated in April, 1923, was deemed the opportune occasion for the publication of this volume. The work of selection and of editing, however, required much more time than had been anticipated, causing this regrettable delay.

The editor has refrained from modifying the text, permitting himself to make only casual verbal corrections and changes, where necessary. His work has been to a large extent mechanical, to verify references, to arrange the material, to prepare an index and to bring some of the data up to date. A few notes have been added for the sake of greater clarity and historical exactness. He has been aided in this work also by Dr. Solis Cohen and Dr. Adler, both of whom read the proofs and made a number of valuable suggestions, for which he is deeply grateful.

The volume now presented contains only a small portion of Dr. Morais's writings. There is still in manuscript a large collection of homiletic material, as well as many historical and biographical studies and essays on Jewish problems of the day, which are of considerable interest and value. Perhaps at some future time, another selection from the material on hand will be presented to the public.

JULIUS H. GREENSTONE.

Philadelphia, May 10, 1926

## ITALIAN HEBREW LITERATURE

### I. SHABBETAI DONNOLO

From the time that Judah Maccabee fell into the fatal mistake of seeking Rome as an ally, the Jews, doubtless, began to settle in Italy. Their number must have been considerable, since we read that Mathya,<sup>1</sup> a noted sage of the Mishnah, had opened a college at the capital. The stability it achieved in the midst of a community steeped in heathenism, may have been due to the popularity enjoyed by its president. What he taught was certainly calculated to win favor even with those who differed so very essentially in religious view from the Jewish inhabitants. "Be the first to show courtesy to every man"<sup>2</sup> was one of his favorite maxims, and that he practically carried out the broad principles imparted, the testimony of his contemporaries goes far to show; for, in giving illustrations to the Biblical command, "That only which is altogether just shalt thou follow,"<sup>3</sup> they cite the conduct of the sage at the head of a Hebrew academy at Rome.

But notwithstanding that the Roman Hebrew Academy flourished, and drew to itself some of the most renowned teachers in Israel, we do not know whether its influence reached other cities in the peninsula; nor are data extant from which we may form an opinion on the state of Jewish

<sup>1</sup> Mathya, i. e. Mattithiah b. Heresh (or Harash), a Palestinian Tanna of the second century. He settled in Rome, probably on account of the Hadrianic persecutions in Palestine (comp. Bacher, *Agada d. Tannaiten*, I, 380-384; Frankel, *Darke ha-Mishnah*, new ed., p. 138, Warsaw, 1923) [G]

<sup>2</sup> The full quotation is: "Meet each man with friendly greeting; be the tail among lions rather than the head among foxes" (Aboth IV. 15) [G]

<sup>3</sup> Deut. xvi:26, comp. Sanh. 32b. His extreme piety is exemplified in the famous story about the temptation set before him by Satan, which he resisted (*Midrash Tanhuma*, ed. Buber, addition to *Hukkat*; also in *Midrash 'Aseret ha-Dibrot*, ed. Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash I.* 79) [G]

learning in Italy during the Amoraic and most of the Gaonic periods. All eyes seemed turned to the schools in Palestine, and subsequently to various cities of Persia. Nearly nine centuries had passed since Mathya ben Harash had disseminated sacred knowledge at Rome, and nothing authentic was related of the intellectual progress of the thousands who were brought as captives or who voluntarily emigrated to that metropolis and the neighboring cities. This lack of information may be attributed, in the main, to the wars continually waged throughout Asia by the Roman Empire; communication between the Jews of Italy and their Eastern brethren being thus cut off. But we may also surmise that Judaism in the peninsula, believing that it had already received sufficient light from the focus of traditional learning—the Holy Land—did not look to Babylon for further instruction; hence the absolute silence of the talmudists concerning it. It is at the opening of the tenth century of the common era, that a Hebrew author, hailing from the vicinity of Naples, challenges attention.

Shabbetai Donnolo, of Oria, born in 913, may well be termed the father of our commentators. With a freedom of thought befitting an Ibn Ezra, and an acumen rivalling that of Maimonides, his explanations of the text aim principally to exclude the idea of corporeity in the Creator (Anthropomorphism). His commentary on *Sefer Yezirah*—which the learned of our time have published from a manuscript in the Ducal library at Parma<sup>1</sup>—reveals deep research and vast erudition. Deserving of notice are the ideas held out that *ne-shamah* (soul) is analogical to *shama-yim* (heavens), whence it proceeds and whither it will return; and that the seat of intelligence is in the highest point of the human frame—the skull—in the same manner as the glory of the Deity, the Supreme Intelligence, is said to be enthroned in the highest point of the universe.

<sup>1</sup> His commentary on *Sefer Yezirah* was published by Geiger in his "Melo Hofnayim", p. 29, and in its entirety by Castelli, "Il Commenti di Sabbatai Donnolo sur Libro della Creazione", Florence, 1880. This is also known by the name of Hakemani or Tahkemoni. [G]



Donnolo, who practised medicine<sup>1</sup> in Lombardy and through Upper Italy for his daily maintenance, found time nevertheless to write on exegesis, theology, astronomy—blended, of course, with false astrological notions, greatly in vogue among the ancients—while he tried his hand also, but to little purpose, at versification. And so anxious was he to become familiar with writings in Arabic and Greek, that he bent his mind on mastering those languages, and compassed his object. Interesting as it most assuredly would be to possess a full biography of the man who drew the attention of the Jewish literary world to Italy, after a period of silence extending through centuries, we must still rest satisfied with very meagre accounts.

In 925, hordes of Saracens invaded the Neapolitan territories. Ten prominent Israelites fell by the sword, and many were taken prisoners; among others, Donnolo and his parents. The latter were carried to Africa, and sold there as slaves, but their son succeeded by some means in being rescued. It appears that the Jews of Otranto, an influential congregation, procured his freedom by paying a heavy ransom. At all events, Shabbetai Donnolo, who was then but twelve years old, studied in Italian schools, and issued forth to grow famous for his versatility of genius, as well as for his skill in the medical art. Most of his productions have been lost, yet from fragments which remain, the reader may be led to award to the author the merit of having anticipated in several instances philosophers and scientists of later ages, and of having likewise served as a guide to Biblical expositors and lexicographers of renown.

He may be considered the first among Jewish celebrities whom a thirst for knowledge induced to travel far in quest of men, of whatever creed, capable of gratifying his longing; and the acquaintance with foreign languages which he had gained must have facilitated the accomplishment

<sup>1</sup> Steinschneider published in 1867 what is left of Donnolo's medical work "*Sefer ha-Yakar*", under the title "*Donnolo, Fragment des ältesten medicinischen Werkes*", which contains directions for the preparation of herbs for medicinal purposes. [G]

of his wish. But of his intercourse with learned contemporaries,<sup>1</sup> of the extent of his compositions, of his private life and of the year of his death, we are left in ignorance. The keen eye of modern criticism has seen only glimpses, and with them we must be content. However, a clear inference from even the little we have gathered about Shabbetai Donnolo is this: In the tenth century of the common era, Hebrew literature had reached a high state of culture in Italy. Otranto and Bari on the Adriatic could lay claim to such pre-eminence that they had become proverbial for the spreading of Biblical and oral lore. People thus applied to them the sentence of Isaiah<sup>2</sup>: "Out of *Bari* goeth forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from *Otranto*."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Gudemann, *ha-Torah weha-Hayyim*, II, 16, regarding his relation to the Abbott Nilus; comp. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s. v. [G]

<sup>2</sup> ii:3. [G]

<sup>3</sup> Since this exceedingly brief sketch was written, David Castelli, widely known for his multifarious productions, published at Florence (Italy) a large volume, partly in Hebrew and partly in Italian, on *Sabbatai Donnolo* (as he calls the illustrious sage). The author speaks at length of the book *Hachmoni* or *Tahkemoni* by Donnolo and of his comment on the *Sepher Yezirah*, in connection with the so-called science of the Kabbalah.

## II.—NATHAN BEN YEHIEL

The family Acco<sup>1</sup>, in Rome, was noted for learning. Yehiel had been invested, early in the eleventh century, with the position of chief of the college; and, as such, his solution of theological questions became authoritative.

Of Daniel, the oldest, and Abraham, the youngest, among his sons, honorable mention is made by writers of later ages. But Nathan won a wider and more lasting renown through the gigantic work he undertook and brought to completion. At a period in which a few manuscripts, but, in a greater measure, memory, formed a writer's main resource, he arranged alphabetically all the words met in the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmud, in the most ancient commentaries and homiletic books, or Midrashim, explaining them in full, and adding occasional illustrations which cast a flood of light on obscure passages in the writings of the Rabbis. Even more astonishing than the consummate knowledge of the lexicographer in the Jewish literature of his time, must appear his acquaintance with languages. Besides the Italian, his mother tongue—of which he makes frequent use in the course of his elucidations—words in Persian, Arabic, Greek, and Latin, with which Talmudic works abound, find an interpreter in Nathan of Rome. And if Benjamin Mussafia,<sup>2</sup> many centuries after (1645), did Hebrew learning a service by his annotations, improving on the original with respect to Latin and Greek terms, that circumstance does not detract in the least from the merits of our author. The labor he had imposed on himself was

<sup>1</sup> Acco, according to Rapoport; but later investigation established the fact that Yehiel belonged to the Anaw family (degli Mansi, piatelli) one of the oldest Jewish families in Italy, descendants of which are still flourishing there (Jew. Ency., s. v. Anaw and Family Tree given there.)[G]

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Mussafia, Rabbi in Amsterdam, published a supplement to an edition of the Aruch, which was issued there in 1655, under the title of "Musaf he-'Aruk", in which he explains the Greek and Latin terms found there. [G]

immense, and his supply of books of reference exceedingly scanty. Mussafia could avail himself of the productions of Buxtorf, the elder; Nathan had no guide except his own vast erudition; no model save that which his methodical mind suggested.

It is possible that Gershom, called "the light of the captivity"—universally known as the presiding officer of the Worms Synod that prohibited polygamy—hinted the idea which Nathan Ben Yehiel carried out. The two have been described by some as fellow-students, and by others as teacher and pupil<sup>1</sup>. But in either capacity the former may have told the latter that his brother Machir<sup>2</sup> had ventured upon a similar work. Nevertheless, nothing so extensive and comprehensive had ever been attempted before. In fact, the necessity for it did not exist, so long as the academies of Sura and Pumbeditha continued. The idiom of the Talmud was well understood, while the Geonim employed it in their teaching and casuistical decisions. But with the close of the colleges in the east, and a more general scattering of the learned in Israel, words once familiar to many became unintelligible, and they would have been entirely obliterated from the human mind had not the author of the first lexicon saved them from extinction, and by saving them delivered also much of rabbinical literature from the moth of ages.

To form an adequate judgment of his successful labor, one must be in the habit of having recourse to it, in order to overcome difficulties which the study of the Talmud continually presents. Still, one or two of his definitions may be cited, to give an idea, however faint, of the diligence brought to bear on the task which he assumed.

<sup>1</sup> This is the opinion of Rapoport. Kohut, however, claims that Nathan could not have been R. Gershom's immediate disciple (see his *Introduction to Aruch*, p. XII). [G]

<sup>2</sup> Machir b. Judah, a brother of R. Gershom, was the author of a dictionary, which was known under the name of "Alfa Beta de R. Machir" This is not extant, but known from references made to it by other writers. [G]

*Askarah*: In the first chapter of treatise Berakot<sup>1</sup> we find the following: "Askarah is like a splinter getting entangled in wool which has been combed;" an expression implying that it is a disease hard to be removed, being caused by a particle introducing itself into the throat, and closing it up in a manner which produces suffocation. Possibly, the term has analogy to the Biblical word *sakar*, as we read in the Psalms: "May the mouth of those who speak falsehood *be closed* (yissaker)<sup>2</sup>"; or, we may look for its derivation to the Greek, meaning some putrid matter growing in the wind-pipe and roof of the mouth. In the second chapter of treatise Shabbat,<sup>3</sup> however, it is clearly stated that "Askarah" denotes a sickness proceeding from some internal derangement, and developing itself in the manner explained above. See "Sarnak", which is another word conveying the same idea.

In treatise Yoma,<sup>4</sup> we are informed that R.Mathya allowed bleeding on the Sabbath to him who suffered with "sarnak". And in various other places in the Talmud the term is obviously explained, when the Rabbis<sup>5</sup> remarked, that, although since we lost political power, we dare not inflict capital punishment, still an Israelite who anciently would have deserved hanging, may be punished by God with drowning, or with "sarnak". *Sarnaka* in Aramaic agrees with *hanak*, "strangling" in Hebrew.

*Kitta*: In the eleventh<sup>6</sup> chapter of the Mishnah Nega'im we meet with the phrase, Kitta which has fringes. In Yelammedenu (Tanhuma) section Beha'aloteka, "Kittas of fine linen, Kittas of purple." Further. in the same volume, speaking of the ordinance of the Zizit, purple mantles, and Kittas—wherewith they adorned their per-

<sup>1</sup> Berakot 8a [G]

<sup>2</sup> Psalms lxiii:12 [G]

<sup>3</sup> Shabbat 33b [G]

<sup>4</sup> Yoma 84a [G]

<sup>5</sup> Ketubot 30b; Sanhedrin 37b [G]

<sup>6</sup> Mishnah 7 [G]



sons—are not included in the obligation. In the Pesikta,<sup>1</sup> and in Vayikra Rabba it is stated that R. Joshua, son of Levi, being in Rome, saw marble pillars covered over with *tapitias* (tapestry), that they might not spoil by being too much exposed to the inclemency of the weather. But in another copy of the same book, instead of *tapitias* it is written *kittas*, showing, at any event, that the word means an object intended as a cover.

Not to fatigue the reader, and still give him a slight illustration of the contents of the "Aruch," two words were selected, which called for short and simple definitions. But any of its pages will reveal the marvellous acquaintance of its author with all which had been written, or orally transmitted, touching sacred lore, and with what industry and perseverance he labored, despite obstacles which would have deterred all but an extraordinary man. Upwards of seven hundred years have elapsed since Nathan the Lexicographer, produced his book, and to this day it justly remains a standard to the student of the Talmud.

In 1824, Moses Landau made a German<sup>2</sup> version of it, with copious annotations, calling the same "Ma'arche Lashon."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pesikta d'R. Kahana, ed. Buber, 74a, see Buber's note ad loc.; Vayikra Rabba, Emor, 27. [G]

<sup>2</sup> This was the complete Aruch, with Mussafia's Musaf he-'Aruk, and copious notes in Hebrew and German by Moses Landau, grandson of the famous Ezekiel Landau, to whose memory the book, published at Prague, in five volumes, is dedicated. [G]

<sup>3</sup> Since this extremely short sketch was prepared, the Rev. Dr. Alexander Kohut, Rabbi of Ahabath Chesed Congregation of New York, has published his "Aruch Completum," presenting voluminous additions to the original Aruch and enriching it with most erudite annotations.

### III—IMMANUEL OF ROME

The spirit of Hebrew poetry, whose shattered temple was splendidly rebuilt in Andalusia, found votaries also along the borders of the Tiber and the Arno. Italian Jews—of a nature ardent and vivacious—soon became enamored with the effusions of their Spanish coreligionists. The first to show how powerful had been the influence of the awakened genius was a Roman of the thirteenth century. Charizi's<sup>1</sup> intellect struck brilliant sparks, and the mind of Immanuel was all ablaze.

In style and in mode of presentation, the two writers bear great resemblance to one another. But as Immanuel surpasses Charizi in exuberance of wit, so does he exceed his prototype in the art of misapplying the wealth of language at his command. Charizi,—light and volatile,—utters scarcely a word offensive to chastity; Immanuel absolutely luxuriates in similes which do not fall short of the loose descriptions of his countryman, Boccaccio. There can be no extenuating cause for that prostitution of the sacred tongue. The apparent wish to display so thorough a mastery of the Hebrew as to be able to mould it at will, can not excuse the obscene imageries with which the poetical work of the Italian Jew teems. The Rabbis<sup>2</sup> who

<sup>1</sup> Judah b. Solomon al-Harizi, was a Spanish Hebrew poet of the early part of the thirteenth century. After he translated into Hebrew the "Makamot" of the Arabic poet, Hariri, he composed his famous work "Tahkemoni", after the model of Hariri. The "makama" was a favorite style of poetry among the ancient Arabs. It consists of a dialogue between the hero, usually the author himself, and another person, whose main function is to stimulate the muse of the hero by his questions. Each "makama" deals with a specific subject and there is no necessary connection with the preceding or with the following. It is usually written in rhymed prose, interspersed with short poems (See Jew. Ency., s. v.) [G]

<sup>2</sup> See Shulhan Aruk, Orah Hayyim 307:15, where the reading of Immanuel's poems is forbidden even on week days, because of their profanity and lasciviousness. This style of writing was the prevalent

placed it on the list of prohibited books, were correct in their judgment. They saw therein much that was calculated to enkindle unruly passions, and that made them justly ignore all other considerations. The almost unique excellencies of the composition, the reputation of the author as a noted commentator and grammarian, did not deter them from branding his love songs with the stigma of reproach, as wanton and profane. And yet the condemnation rising unbidden on the lips of the right-thinking reader can not hold back the swelling tide of admiration of a composition studded with literary gems. The "Mahberoth Immanuel," or "Immanuel's Cantos," consists of poems written on various occasions, but collected into a whole and published at the instance of an anonymous Maecenas, and probably at his expense, to raise the author above want, and dissipate the melancholy mood consequent upon the vicissitudes of fortune. As in Charizi's work (the *Tahkemoni*), there is a somewhat loosely connected series of narratives, in charming rhythmical prose, each being followed by some stanzas, in which the ideas it advances are metrically presented.

Immanuel introduces his readers to a Purim feast held at Fermo, in the Marca d'Ancona. A large and merry company sit together. Amidst rich viands and sparkling wines the conversation turns on love and song. Some boast of a poetical vein which never flowed in them; others indulge in plagiarism, and strive to palm off stolen ideas as their own; and many rehearse poems of our author, but so distorted and mutilated as to be scarcely recognizable. This circumstance excites the poet's anger, and he gives vent to feelings of deep mortification.

There happens to be among the assemblage a man of wealth and wide culture, a patron of learning, who stirs up Immanuel to imitate Charizi, arranging methodically all his effusions, and offering them to the public under some

one among the Italian poets and novelists of the age and Immanuel should not be condemned too severely for adopting the style and manner of his Italian contemporaries (comp. Gudemann, l. c., II, 102-3) [G]

pleasing fiction; the same opulent friend expressing a desire that he himself be chosen as the imaginary associate with whom ideas are to be exchanged. The poet consents, and, invoking his genius in sublime diction, proceeds to describe the munificence of the prince (so he calls his fictitious companion), and the streaming light of his poesy, which, like a sun, is reflected by all lesser orbs.

The first canto, or *Mahbereth*, is devoted to a succinct history of his own life. He upbraids Time—whimsical and inconstant—which with a coarse hand tears the splendid robe wherewith it had once adorned his person; rebukes the unfaithfulness of men, who point barbed arrows at the breast whose throbbings had proved a generous support to rising talent; and with biting sarcasm inveighs against those who take advantage of his fall, to strike him with their thorny staves, forgetful of the days when the massive rod, which his intellect wielded, swallowed up the rods of the greatest and the wisest. The prince then gently remonstrates against the total yielding of a gigantic mind to gloom and despair. Immanuel is comforted: the bright hope of happier days dispels somber thoughts. The certainty that he would live in the memory of posterity, through his numerous productions, reconciles him to past trials, and he breaks forth into extravagant expressions of self-praise, distasteful yet interesting, for we learn therefrom the numbers and characters of his literary works,—all of which, except that whereof a sketch is here given, and a commentary on *Proverbs*, remain in manuscript<sup>1</sup>—and gain also an insight into his private life and domestic relations. He extols to the sky the virtues of his wife. Her thrift, her kindness, her modesty, her piety, and withal her comeliness, form the burden of his song. And contemplating her righteous serenity amid reverses, he closes his encomium

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written, the Christian lover of Hebrew literature, the illustrious Pietro Perraeu, the librarian at the royal library in Parma, issued a number of works from the pen of Immanuel. [Perreau edited several of his commentaries in a very limited edition. See "A Christian Hebrew Scholar", p. 222 note 1. [G]]

with this sentiment: "Would I were dead, and she the object of fond love to a happier being!"

The prince, who had listened with complacency, ventures the remark, that perhaps the poet considers all women as faultless as she whom he has thus extolled. This observation brings forth a long tirade against the female sex, in which the treacherous Delilah and her like, hold a conspicuous place, and in which the poet's wife is again cited in contrast as a single instance of purity embosomed in beauty, while other women have no guardian over their chastity, save homeliness.

The second canto opens with the description of a public meeting held by adepts in the art of versification. Greetings are exchanged, and good humor prevails, when some of the company descry a number of females moving forward, marshalled by two, whose apparel denotes their rank,—one surpassingly fair, the other so extremely ugly that the adornments with which she has bedecked herself cannot soften in the least her hideous countenance. All eyes are riveted on both, all lips breathe in turn words of love and words of disgust. The prince then proposes that the poet shall delineate the charms of Tamar, the handsome, and that he shall follow with the deformities of Beriah, the unsightly. There ensues a dialogue fraught with startling wit, in which Biblical sentences are used most ingeniously; but, in too many instances, to a purpose unseemly and lascivious.

The third canto may be considered a sequel to the preceding. The prince having had a test of the poet's felicitous thoughts and bewitching style, wishes to try how far these mental powers could influence a retiring maiden, esteemed for her accomplishments and unaffected graces. His high-wrought portrait of her person incites a prurient curiosity. The poet, unable to control the passion aroused within his breast, implores the favor of being shown that extraordinary damsel whom no ardor of youth could conquer. He sees her, and is struck by her stately figure and dignified carriage. He essays to approach her with



accents of fervid love. She indignantly rejects his proposals. Nothing daunted, the poet, in a flight of his fervent imagination, indites words suasive and plaintive; portrays his misery at her refusal, and craves to be restored to happiness by a look of the eyes, whose lustre Orion and the Pleiades envy. The high-spirited maiden answers the epistle in terms of irony and scorn. She counsels reserving his amorous songs, which to her are an insult, for the unwary, apt to be lured away. As to herself, she is the deaf adder that will not hearken to the "voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." Amazed by her choice rhetoric and seemly demeanor, the poet begins to distrust his own powers. The prince jeeringly asks him then to acknowledge himself defeated. Stung by the raillery, the writer summons fresh courage, and addresses the damsel once again. Fascinatingly, he feigns to believe she is wounded, but will not confess it. He meets with a more withering rebuke, still he persists. At length, perseverance vanquishes—the once invulnerable heart succumbs. The poet hastens to the prince to recount the final result of his siege; but, instead of receiving congratulations, he hears bitter self-reproaches, utterances that betoken compunction and repentance.

The patron had transcended the limits of discretion. He had believed that his gifted protege would be foiled in every attempt, and thus he could enjoy bantering the poet on his failure. The idea that he had cruelly exposed his step-sister to the flatteries of a troubadour cut him to the quick, and he commanded that she be forthwith informed of the design on her feelings. To calm the agitated prince, the poet writes, pointing to caution as a future panoply; inexorableness of purpose as the only buckler to ward off the poisoned strokes of men's falsities. The damsel reads and grieves; becomes inconsolable, pines away and dies; and the author of her sorrow, broken in spirit, laments the departed fragrance of the spotless lily he had wantonly trampled under foot.

The fourth canto carries us before the prince ten years after the occurrence narrated. He regrets that the poet, who

had made existence joyful, moved far away by reason of a misfortune that could not be altered. Anxious to bring him back to his palace, he commits his thoughts to paper, renews the assurance of his patronage, and urges a speedy return to the spot dedicated to song. The object of his searching is found much changed in appearance through the decade which had glided by. The sad past is dwelt upon and deprecated; the absence of staunch friends during the interval elapsed furnishes a mournful theme to the poet, and, drawing a contrast, he lavishes praises in great profusion on his Maecenas, so generous, and so appreciative, irrigating the thirsty soul with the copious showers of his gifts, quickening the dispirited by the smiles of his approval. The prince inquires of the poet, whether he had composed a lament on advancing age, and whether the intellect which whilom towered above all, had been lowered by the unsparing hand of time.

These queries elicit two poems, in which the writer, though chiding old age for stealing away his genius, exhibits it with undiminished force. Exquisitely fine is his representation of the shadow of youth stepping back ten degrees and his appeal to Isaiah<sup>1</sup> to restore it to its pristine state. In another lengthy poem, the writer illustrates his former mastery of the art of writing, by describing an adventure with Ofra, whom he enchains to his will. But his figures of speech, and the encomium he bestows on his abilities, offend the sense of propriety. Better pleased will be the sober mind to rest on his delineation of human heedlessness, when age bids us prepare for crossing that bridge of sighs spanning the brook which ends where eternity begins. The faithful may also derive satisfaction in perusing Immanuel's metrical composition on the thirteen creeds of Maimonides; but neither pleasure nor satisfaction can accrue from his indelicate allusions and immoderate self-praise.

The fifth canto begins with a dialogue between the

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to Isaiah xxxviii.3 (comp. II Kings xx.9-11), to the sign which was given to Hezekiah that he would be healed of his sickness. [G]

prince and the poet, to entertain a company on the Feast of Purim. Various subjects are discussed: excessive fondness for sleeping, intemperance, love and hatred, friendship, jealousy, avarice; but each of them—attractive as it certainly is, because of the flow of wit which permeates it—presents the same objectionable feature. Some of the metaphors are sheer immodesty.

The sixth canto purports to be a vindication of Italo-Hebraic writers. At a large meeting of friends, the question arises as to whom is due the palm for excellence in poetical effusions. Some name the Arabo-Spanish; others, the Jews of Southern France. Italy receives but scant praise. Immanuel remains silent, till a Provencal makes the boast that none dare compete with his countrymen, for he alone could shame all present into silence. The Roman looks around, and beholds humiliation painted on every countenance. He cries out: "Men! who is he that so asperses our honor, and belittles our greatness? Be not dismayed; I will go forth and fight your battles, and if I do not break this braggart's lance in a hundred shivers, I shall bear your everlasting reporach." The assemblage applauds. He then challenges the Provencal to come forward, and let the waves of his sapience roll on; he will soon hedge him in on all sides. The trial agreed upon is that to every question propounded, our poet shall give, as a fitting and rhythmical answer, a quotation from the Scriptures. Over three hundred times does the querist put his opponent to a severe test; but the suitable reply is always at hand. This production is truly a rich treat to the Hebraist. No straining of the sense, no far-fetched citations mar its smoothness. All that is said is so precise, so exactly to the point, that it seems as if it were written in Holy Writ for that special purpose.

The seventh canto is, ostensibly, a complaint over the fate of some women ill-matched with boorish husbands, and over the follies of a self-conceited grammarian, wedded to a prudish wife. We might wish it had never been penned, for a

treasure of ideas and a stream of eloquence are wasted in concocting a tissue of obscenities.

The eighth canto is an appreciable improvement on the former. The poet narrates to the prince that, in imitation of the immortal Gabirol, he had indited a song of two hundred verses. Its purpose was to administer a gentle reproof to a bosom friend who, endowed with brilliant talents and brimful of erudition, still let his buoyant temperament carry him, at times, into the arms of seductive pleasures. That poem may be regarded as a garland woven for the brow of his erring friend, and a crown of thorns for his own head. In it the writer frankly acknowledges his shortcomings, and the superiority of him whom he sought to reclaim to virtue; but the production which follows it, and which was elicited when the same friend wended his steps to foreign climes, surpasses the other in fluency and richness of imagery. Every sentence is a diamond set in gold. The friend in whose converse he took delight is likened to a Jordan of limpid water, healing the spirit that languishes; to the pot of manna lying close to the Ark of the Covenant—a precious relic of God's wonders. He bids his song go, traverse seas, climb steep ascents; and, when the faithful friend is met, tell him ever to cherish the memory of the days in which he had built a royal mansion in the chamber of his heart. The Prince admires that manly affection, and the manner in which it is exhibited; but he asks whether it had always been reciprocated, for report said that a certain writer treated the poet with contumely, applying to him opprobrious epithets. To disabuse the mind of his patron of such a misapprehension, Immanuel gives a characteristic account of the blunders of his antagonist, and of the letter in which he had scourged the presumptuous scribbler.

From the contents of that missive we gather the information that our author prided himself on the possession of a recondite knowledge, based upon a mystical interpretation of the Bible—whether akin to the theories of Kabbalism or not, it would be difficult to decide. The prince relishes the piquant raillery he has just heard, and asks that he may

retain a transcript to read and laugh over, when feeling dull. The poet observes, that if he looks for something which will put melancholy to flight, and usher in good humor, he must have a narrative of what had transpired between himself and Rabbi Aaron.

The old man had come to Paris with a large box of valuable books in the Hebrew and Arabic languages. There he met Immanuel, in company with some learned friends. He gave the box in their charge, stating that he was going to Rome, and would be back in a month. But he warned them that the books should not be taken out, since he had spent years in procuring them, and he feared they might be mislaid, torn, or improperly used. Scarcely had he gone, when Immanuel, burning with the desire to read the rare works, of which he had seen the list, forced open the box, selected the best manuscripts, copied them and incited his companions to do likewise. Rabbi Aaron came back at the stated time, and perceiving what had been done, grew furious. No apology could pacify him. Immanuel, ever ready with witty sayings, sought facetiously to turn away wrath, but to no purpose. Rabbi Aaron left in high dudgeon. The poet who had known him long, and respected his character and learning, addressed him in a style pre-eminently beautiful, such as the reader, who understands, may be inspired to bless therefor the Divine Power "who created the utterance of the lips"; lamenting at the same time that the highly gifted Immanuel should ever have employed his powers of utterance in the service of a perverted taste.

The ninth canto includes a song on every month of the year, in imitation of a poem on the same topic by Charizi—our author's ideal of a Hebrew writer—and another on arts and sciences, on countries and their tongues, similar to Italian compositions of that nature, concluding with a summary of Immanuel's linguistic attainments, and of his numerous travels.

The tenth canto begins with a jeremiad by the poet on his departed prosperity, which the prince knows how to convert into a canticle by touching a weak spot in his



protege's excessive vanity. He is assured that none is so rich as himself, before whom the golden gates of learning stand wide open; that all men rejoice over valueless possessions, but he alone has garnered priceless treasures. The wisdom which drops from his lips is waited for like the morning dew; even then the elders of the city may be looking for the arrival in their midst of so elegant and finished a speaker, that they might listen to the doctrines he instils. Thus suavisely is he led forth and, reaching the place where he is welcomed, joins the prince in laying down short but pithy maxims on religion and morals. To these is appended a eulogy of one of his admirers, too hyperbolical to impress the disinterested reader pleasantly.

The eleventh canto presents the poet in the garb of a physician prescribing to a female, so squeamish and fastidious that she fears pollution by a touch of her pulse. His recipe under these circumstances excites much merriment, and the prince bursting into laughter improvises a madrigal, to which our author responds in the same strain. Sonnets of mutual admiration continue to be interchanged at some length; finally the patron accords the palm to his poet, and wondering whence he had drawn that ever-flowing stream of knowledge, Immanuel mentions Maimonides as the mighty source of his erudition. Very pertinently he pronounces the books of the sage of Cordova queens, in comparison to which others are waiting-maids following directions. But very unlike the austere philosopher of Andalusia, the Roman regales the sportive taste of his friends with a metrical description of the Hebrew alphabet—the letters of which, he asserts, point to psychological, metaphysical, and natural sciences—and creates perfect ecstasy by a missive written with words capable of an entirely opposite meaning, and another, which, when read regularly, sounds as a blessing, transposed is a curse. This play of words reaches its climax when the prince charges our author to send a secret communication, composed exclusively of Biblical names, to some members of his family. The skill displayed is notably great. Thus, for instance, to relate, among other private affairs.

that his brother Moses, who had roamed abroad, and was taken prisoner, had gained his liberty, he wrote—*Eleazar Mosheh Ahi; Orah Hori*—"God helped Moses, my brother; the wanderer (is) free."

After such a feat of ingenuity the prince ceases to try the poet; and, as a constant memento from the man whose genius he idolizes, begs for and receives ten lines of didactic poetry, which he places in the room where he prayed and studied.

The twelfth canto is a noble tribute to a relative and friend, adorned with rare virtues, and to one of his intimate associates, equally learned, if not equally famous. Of the first, the poet speaks in language whose every syllable breathes gratitude, for Leon Romano it was that kindled in his bosom the spark which time fanned into an unquenchable flame. Leon Romano,<sup>1</sup> with a generous hand, had unfastened bolts and bars, and led Immanuel into the hidden chambers, where he had been whilom wedded to the Hebrew Muse. And yet the man so favored had purloined nuptial gifts—pearls and rubies, agates and amethysts, and with them had he purchased admiration. A confession couched in the terms which our poet alone could mould, commands unconditional forgiveness. A compensation made in sweet distiches, in the outpouring of sentiments, now soft as the tones of an aeolian harp, anon grand as the deep swelling of an organ, is full and gracious. Would it were in the power of him that draws this sketch to reproduce such thoughts in the vernacular! But nothing approaching the original can he hope to offer; hence silence is best.

<sup>1</sup> Judah ben Moses, better known as Leon Romano, the Philosopher, was an outstanding figure in Roman Jewry during the life of Immanuel. He was born in 1292 at Rome and he was thus a younger contemporary and also a relative of Immanuel. He translated several of the well-known medieval philosophical works and also wrote a commentary on Maimonides' 'Sefer ha-Madda'. He was reported to have been the teacher of King Robert of Naples. He died after 1350. Immanuel always speaks of him in the highest terms of praise (see further p. 47; comp. Vogelstein und Rieger, *Geschichte der Juden in Rom*, I, 440-442; Gudemann, l. c. 128-129). [G]

In the song to Benjamin,<sup>1</sup> his intimate associate, Leon Romano, figures again conspicuously; for, seemingly, Immanuel was never weary in rehearsing the praises of the preceptor of King Robert of Naples, the favorite of fortune, before whom, as he exquisitely expresses it, the muses made obeisance, and science prostrated herself seven times to the earth.

The thirteenth canto makes us acquainted with another poetical character; Leon<sup>2</sup> also by name, from South Italy. He had addressed Immanuel in rhyme, possibly to comfort him, when a target to afflictions, pressed hard by creditors, frowned upon by the rich, whose assumed liberality he had celebrated in verses. Leon Siciliano was also poor; and, as he eked out a scanty livelihood by improvising, bartering the creations of his prolific mind for the coin that bought his daily bread, and by teaching the young, he may naturally have sympathized with his fellow-poet in his sore plight. But his letter arrived at a season during which Immanuel was unfit to answer in his wonted style. As he tells us, the lyre hung on the weeping willow, while he was drinking to the dregs the cup of gall and wormwood.

Two summers passed ere he emerged from the sea of trouble, but his genius awoke, and in four poems, successively written, he acknowledged his indebtedness to the "rising star" guiding the perplexed. To the prince, who listens and marvels, the author owns his inferiority to Leon Siciliano, in metrical compositions, though he pronounces himself his equal, if not his superior, in rhythmical prose. In fact, Immanuel is not always felicitous in the former. The severe restrictions which Hebrew poets of the Middle Ages voluntarily accepted from the Arabs, and with which they burdened their successors,—the rules

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin ben Judah Bozocco, born in Rome in 1295, was an exegete and grammarian and wrote several works which are still in manuscript. (Vogelstein und Rieger, l. c., 388-392; Gudeman, l. c., 133) [G]

<sup>2</sup> Judah Siciliano al-Sha'ari, was a poet who composed a riming dictionary, which is preserved in manuscript at Oxford and Rome (Vogelstein und Rieger, l. c., 445). [G]

of *Yated* and *Tenuah*,<sup>1</sup> so exacting and oppressive—robbed his verses, in a measure, of spontaneity and of music. At all events, they do not equal, in ease and grace, the Melizah, or unencumbered style of prose in a rhythmical dress. Thus, for example, his elegy on the demise of his father-in-law—embodied in this same canto—teems with beauties. The plaintive strains echo in our breasts, when he cries:

Fate severs, at the mournful hour of death,  
The cords that bind men tightly, heart to heart.  
Alas! my friend revered has left the earth—  
O bonds of love, relax not! Closer draw  
His soul and mine, until I too, depart.

Nevertheless, his choice diction in prose might have deepened the tone of that funeral song.

The fourteenth canto, composed to arouse the prince, when laboring under a fit of dejection, is both a satire and a rebuke, conveying a wholesome lesson. A certain Moses of Rome, much regarded for his beneficence, was married to a wicked woman, named Rosalie. She gave birth to a child, whom he called Daniel, but who grew to be as wicked as King Manasseh. Unable to live with a scold, and finding he could not control his son, whom the mother encouraged to all sorts of mischief, he decided to leave for unknown parts. He settled in Greece, and for twenty years gained riches by his industry, and the love of people by his kindness. Being taken very ill, and feeling he would die, he sent for some reliable friends, and spoke thus: "I choose you for my executors, entrusting to your hands the large fortune I have amassed. Write to Rome, to Daniel, my only heir; but exercise great caution, and be guided by the proofs which will place his claims beyond a shadow of doubt." They promised to follow the instruction received. The man having expired, was buried with the honors due to a pious and upright Jew. Shortly after, a letter arrived at Rome, directed to some of the authorities, requesting that the son

<sup>1</sup> "Yated" the composition of the vocal sheva and the syllable, and the "Tenu'ah", the syllable itself, form the basis of the Hebrew meter fashioned after the Arabic. [G]

of the deceased be sought for, and furnished with the documents confirming his title to the property. But, before Daniel could be found the news had circulated everywhere in the city. All persons at Rome knew of the letter and its contents.

An unprincipled fellow, named Ephraim, took time by the forelock, thinking he might, through his stupendous shrewdness, succeed in getting that of which Daniel would make no better use than himself. Bent upon that scheme, he let his beard grow; he dressed in a suit of black, and, travelling in great haste, reached the place where Moses had resided. He put up at an inn, and sent immediately an errand boy with this message to some of the principal Jews: "Daniel, who mourns for his father, has come, and wishes to be taken to the sacred spot where the paternal remains lie." The men followed the boy to the inn, where Ephraim wept and lamented, exhausting every word of endearment on the memory of the parent he revered. All seemed moved, and accompanied the inconsolable son to the grave of his father. When there, he burst into a flood of tears, and sobbingly exclaimed, "Father, dear father, good and blessed father, I will go to the grave whereunto you have been lowered." With that he tore his clothes, shrieked, and struck his breast, to such a degree that men had to hold him, lest he do himself injury. The next day the same scene was enacted, with some additions, for he threw himself upon the naked earth, as if eager to feed on the very dust that covered his father's body. The spectators could not but believe that he was a sorrow-stricken man, a true mourner, feeling intensely the loss of his father. And as the pseudo-son requested that prayers be said over the grave, and largely distributed alms to the poor in memory of the dead, he created the impression on every mind that he joined piety with filial affection. Some weeks elapsed, and Ephraim continued to appear sad and disconsolate. As a testimony of his veneration, he had a high monument erected, and with his own hand he wrote this epitaph: "Here righteousness lies entombed; the crown of



nobility is hidden beneath the sod. Daniel overwhelmed with affliction, the son who loved his father while he lived, and refused to be comforted at his death, has laid the yielding of his faded joy upon this cold earth."

A full month had now passed, every day of which Ephraim was seen at the synagogue, arrayed in Tallith and Tephillin, making his devotions with every indication of fervor. He never questioned the people of the city about the patrimony, and the executors who considered him intent upon the performance of good deeds, and indifferent about wealth, determined to let him know that a vast fortune was his legitimate possession. Not to commit offense by questions implying suspicion, they waived their right to inquire about the requisite documents, and gave over to him all that the good man had bequeathed to his son Daniel.

With tearful eyes the consummate rogue received the property, and desired to have it announced that he was ready to discharge any debt his father might have contracted during his sickness or prior to it, and any that he himself might unknowingly have left unpaid. He was told not to give himself any concern, for he owed nothing, and the deceased was too correct in his dealings not to have met his obligations without delay. They wished him every happiness; and he, fearing to remain any longer, departed with the fruit of his villainy.

Two years had glided by, when Daniel, who had at length been found, and obtained the authoritative proofs of his birth and descent, presented himself before the executors of his father's will. He made no inquiries about his deceased parent, about the place of his internment, nor anything else, save of the money, which he claimed as his own. None credited his statement; his conduct prejudiced all minds against his character; but, when the documents were produced, a division of opinion took place. Some thought he who had come already, and enriched himself with the substance of the late Moses, was an unmitigated hypocrite; others held, that this one ought to be disbelieved, notwithstanding the papers he had brought. The executors felt

somewhat disconcerted, but took the claimant severely to task regarding his unnatural behavior. They remarked that if he were the real son he would have shown it by some token of grief; that his complete apathy respecting the author of his existence, and his anxiety to get the silver and gold he had bequeathed, stamped him at once as an impostor. They could not account for the producing of the testimonials—which, however, had been very long in coming—but they contrasted the demeanor of the man who, two years since, had bestowed every mark of reverence on the memory of the departed, and without asking once whether Moses had died poor or rich, had dispensed of his own with a liberal hand, and behaved decorously, piously, and gentlemanly, besides having set up a tombstone worthy of being pointed to as a monument of filial tenderness. They added that the absence of the slightest show of dutifulness on the part of the new claimant led them to think that he was his mother's illegitimate son, taking advantage of his knowledge of family affairs to practise imposition.

Daniel, discovering that he had been supplanted by a knave, and that all his remonstrances and quarrels would be of no avail, left the place breathing curses, and returned home to inform his mother of the barren issue of his journey. She listened, and tore off the widow's weeds put on for the occasion. She felt too glad, she said, chiming in with Daniel, that neither herself nor her son had wasted a tear over the loss of the man whose money they could not enjoy.

The prince was much entertained by the story told with finished elegance of language, and, having laughed heartily at the air of sanctimoniousness the subtle Epharim had manifested, and the crocodile tears he had profusely shed, inquired how it was at last with the double-faced wretch. The poet answered: "You ought to have known that Ephraim was what the Bible describes him, 'A cake that has not been turned';<sup>1</sup> that is, a thing of no account, no one cares for it, and it is cast to the dunghill. The ill gotten

<sup>1</sup> Hosea vii.8 [G]

money did not change the villian's nature. The substance quickly gathered in was quite as fast turned out. The hypocrite and the undutiful child now fare alike."

The story is supplemented by a diatribe against oft-successful hypocrisy, pretentious ignorance and vice strutting in the garments of virtue. When our author had ended, the prince addressed his guests as follows: "You have heard sublime sentiment in fitting language. This man has verily sucked dry the breast of knowledge; yet he has a weak body, enfeebled by the strokes of adversity. Were he robust and opulent, would not his powers turn creation itself into a flowery garden?" "No", interrupted the poet; "strength and riches are not to be the accompaniments of learning; they are given rather as a cover to deficiencies. A well shaped white neck needs not a golden chain," and, seizing the opportunity, Immanuel expatiates on the utility of wisdom, on the effect of a correct education, and the importance of preparing the mind for the reception of thoughts that purify and exalt.

The fifteenth canto sets forth a theory which the prince advances in vindication of the ways of Providence, and which the poet is unprepared to admit. The former lays it down as a demonstrable fact, that, though most men complain of their lot, none would exchange his own for that of another. To prove it, he proposes they should travel together, stop persons on the road, question them closely, and judge whether, by properly arguing, a confession will not be elicited that, after all, they have cause to be satisfied with their own condition. The conversation they held with many individuals affords, in several instances, moral instruction; in other its illustrations are frivolous and vulgar; in one case intensely ludicrous. They met with a Hazzan. He looked seedy and ill-fed. His voice was remarkably strong; his family notably large. He had often been at his wits' ends to discover how to provide for their daily wants. The prince, accosting him, said: "Would you like to exchange positions with Mr. A. who is talented, rich, has a good-looking wife and bright-minded children?" "To be sure I would!"

was the instantaneous reply. "But", rejoined the prince, "would you be willing, in order to get what he possesses, to lose your beautiful voice, and have his instead?" "Oh, no; not that!" said he, "for he has the roughest voice I ever heard; his singing is a bark. But when I raise mine at Kedushah or Yozer, the fountains of song open wide. And on Kippur, or Purim, or any of the holidays, whether I chant a psalm, read a Haftarah, or even sing Lamentations on Tish'ah b'Ab, why, all are struck dumb. I make them shed tears. I make them rejoice. Oh, no! Were Mr. A. to offer me all his wealth, he should not have *my* voice."

The sixteenth canto may be compared to an edifice of magnificence without, but foul within. Despite the linguistic graces lavished upon it, we see holiness forced to bow at the shrine of profanity.

The seventeenth canto (a continuation of the preceding) is a wager among three—the prince, the poet, and the husband of a neglected wife. She was to be given to him that improvised best, and her former connubial relation was to be broken off. But to the undisguised chagrin of the prince the husband vanquished his antagonists, alike in sonnets and in the solving of proposed riddles.

The eighteenth canto narrates a controversy between the poet and one of his nephews. This relative, led astray by vainglory, did not scruple to court popularity to the detriment of the moral interests of his superior in age and abilities. Whenever an opportunity presented itself, he would boast of ranking foremost among individuals noted for their retentive memory. To prove it, he would then repeat almost verbatim a lecture he had heard, or a conversation which had been carried on in some foreign language. One day he gathered quite a number of intelligent persons about him, and in their presence stated that, just in proportion as his mind was tenacious in holding what he had once heard, so was his overrated uncle apt to forget. And with a great flourish of rhetoric he proceeded to repeat historical events, blended with occurrences hatched in his own imagination, to name also personages and ob-

jects of antiquity with a very glib tongue. Immanuel felt it was both unkind and unnatural in his sister's child to act thus, and told him openly that the erudition he paraded was foam and bubbles; that all he remembered benefited him naught because it was perfectly irrelevant. He had not shown, for example, that he could quote the Bible indiscriminately, speak intelligently of the various interpretations given to difficult passages, of the grammatical rules evolved therefrom; of what had been written by the ancients on exegesis, and what on the volumes of ancestral traditions. And so long as, instead of enlightening his hearers by an account of the works of a Hayug, a Kimchi, or an Ibn Daud, he contented himself with recounting how a certain ruler was wont to dress, how strong was his retinue, how many were his vassals and his slaves, how many horses and mules, rare birds and precious jewels he possessed, and similar trivial matters, the narrator could not lay claim to public veneration. He might be sure that on such a ground he would never meet his uncle as a rival. The chain of the poet's thoughts was made of an entirely different material. He had also studied men and their nature, but in connection with anatomy, physiology, pathognomy—sciences which expand the human mind; and, as regards the mere recollection of names, he could set chronologically in array those of sages and authors, of books and pamphlets. He contended that the wisdom of one who designed a great building bears no comparison with that of him who founded a philosophical system, nor the knowledge of distances between villages and towns with that of the distances of planets from the earth. He cared nothing about the manner in which some magnate whiled away his life, what amusements he liked best, and what instruments he preferred, but he valued, for instance, an acquaintance with the sacred functions of the high priest at the temple, and whatever appertained to the olden worship of the chosen race. And in this strain Immanuel continued at considerable length, till the indiscreet youth shrank within himself abashed, and became cured of his presumption.



The prince sympathised with the poet, who had to cope with two antagonists: literary jealousy and straitness of means. He lamented that such should often be the fate of the great, and by his kindly utterances drew forth a tribute of thanks due to him as a patron of learning, and a cutting satire on the penuriousness of most of the wealthy, and especially of those who, by a sudden turn of the wheel of fortune, have been lifted from obscurity to prominence. The poet nevertheless candidly admits that honorable exceptions can be met to a rule which is very general; and, warming up into a humor brimful of facetiousness, he offers a richer entertainment than he enjoyed, by the description of a dinner at the table of an opulent Israelite, whom he paid with sonnets.

The nineteenth canto shows a complete metamorphosis. He that had just appeared in the garb of a parasite assumes the form of a moralist. Immanuel sets forth, to the edification of his hearers, sublime truths, to which may fitly be applied the Scriptural simile, "Apples of gold in settings of silver."<sup>1</sup> The author had intended them for a young scholar evincing so much gentleness of spirit, purity of character, and such yearning for what is good and beautiful that his teacher built on those traits the brightest hopes. The sentences are almost perfection itself. Gabirol teeming with lessons of humility; Halevi, full of pathos; the Ibn Ezras, pithy and ardent, would not be brought down from their high pedestal had they penned those verses. In fact, a striking similarity in thought and style, especially with the first-named, may in some instances be traced in this canto. Thus one of the prayers, ostensibly written for the prince, who craved to be inspired to righteousness by doctrines like those instilled into the mind of the youthful pupil, contains a passage which every reader will recognize as the counterpart of another by the immortal Andalusian:

"If thou, O God! slayest me, still will I  
hold fast to hope. Rejected by Thee

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs xxv. 11. [G]

I will flee to Thee for help; the wings  
 of Thy mercy shall cover me.  
 From Thy consuming wrath I will be sheltered  
 in the shade of Thy loving kindness."<sup>1</sup>

Doubtless the two poets lighted upon the same ideas. It would be ungracious to suspect of theft the Italian, so abundant in literary resources.

The twentieth canto is a panorama of objects numerous and diverse; some completely beautiful, other hideous in the extreme. As they are made to pass before our vision, we behold now the genius of poetry; anon, but an impure spirit. In a poem redolent of sweet love and chaste joy, our feelings are shocked by gross vulgarities. Nor are these the only contrasts. Abstruse ideas, befitting the books of a Saadia better than a collection of songs, are presented as a display of learning, while astronomical theories singularly form a theme for stanzas. One moment a dolt plays his pranks, in another moment a sage enchains the attention by the gravest thoughts. A medley of suggestive ideas, bright images, glowing expressions, piquant railleries, and inordinate poetical licenses constitute the *tout d'ensemble* of this canto.

The twenty-first canto has unity of thought. It speaks of death solemnly, and with touches of deep pathos. Each elegy is a lesson tending to humble pride, soften the feelings, and draw us aside from the fleeting pleasures of earth, to fit us for that eternal home where a contem-

<sup>1</sup> Keter Malkut, canto 38, in Davidson's edition, pp. 118, lines 562-4 and Davidson's note on p. 186. Zangwill translates this as follows:

Therefore, though Thou shouldst slay me, yet will I trust in Thee.

For if Thou shouldst pursue my iniquity,  
 I will flee from Thee to Thyself,

And I will shelter myself from Thy wrath in Thy shadow.

Prof. Louis Ginzberg called my attention to the fact that the sentiment in these verses is found also in the Koran, whence Gabirol probably drew his inspiration. (Comp. also Dukes in *Monatsschrift* VIII. 235 quoting Ibn Chalikan I. 394 as a parallel to Gabirol) [G]

plation of Supreme goodness will be the reward of the righteous. The earnest monitions offered throughout might be deemed emanations of an Ibn Pakuda, were it not for the turgid style of a funeral panegyric which the author very oddly composed for himself. True, he admits that the writing must be regarded as a compliance with the wish of his patron, and that its character allows indulgence in hyperbole. But the thoughtful will scarcely fail to detect in it a pompous exhibition of knowledge of men and books, a reiteration of self-praise, which even the idea of being shrouded and coffined could not repress. The context does not favor the construction which a renowned German biographer<sup>1</sup> places on that composition; namely, that Immanuel intended it as a satire on the exaggerations indulged in by orators while eulogizing the dead.

The contents of the twenty-second canto are intensely ludicrous. A Hebraist cannot help enjoying over them many a hearty laugh. Immanuel doubtless caught the inspiration from Charizi, in his description of a Reader in the synagogue, whose blunders equalled in size the turban he wore, and the flowing beard he had let grow, to give himself an air of importance. But he surpasses his model by the variety of subjects represented, and by lively witticisms. It is altogether impossible to show in our vernacular how perfectly comical is the effect of the answers given to questions put by self-conceited dullards. The author pretends to have been consulted oracularly by sixty persons on the interpretation of several sentences from the Bible and the Rabbis. They believed that he alone could relieve their minds from disturbing doubts, little knowing that the discrepancies discovered were the offspring of their stupidity. The manner in which he reconciles every supposed incongruity, without undeceiving the foolish querists, is humorous beyond description. As just stated, this canto must be read in the original. No translation can come near its meaning; but, to

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Graetz, as the writer of this sketch was, on inquiry, kindly informed by Dr. M. Jastrow. [*"Geschichte der Juden"* (1873), vol. VIII, p. 294 [G]]

afford the English reader a faint idea of its purport, a few passages will be cited.

A man, who was considered to have bestowed great attention on the construction of the Biblical language, addressed our author thus: "Say, thou famous commentator, why does Holy Writ express itself so carelessly by stating that Adam told God that the woman had given him *of the tree* ('etz)<sup>1</sup> and he did eat? It ought surely to have written 'she gave me some of the fruit.'" "No", was the reply, "for it means that she took a *stick* ('etz) and gave him a sound beating, till he consented to do as she had done."

Another eagerly inquired, "Can Solomon call a wife virtuous who 'maketh fine linen,'<sup>2</sup> and, instead of using it for her husband and children, selleth it again?" "Yes", said Immanuel, "for she sold it cheaply to the rabbis, to make Taletoth with it."

"I am quite astonished," exclaimed a third "that Isaiah should have invited 'every one that thirsteth to come for water.'<sup>3</sup> It would have been more generous in the prophet to have provided sweet wine." "Very likely," observed our author, "it was the week in which the Fast of Ab happens, when, by reason of national troubles suffered, we dare drink no wine."

"I cannot obtain the sense of a phrase in the book of Aboth (Ethics of the Fathers)," cried out a sapient scholar. "It is written that 'he who gets much flesh ('Basar," viz., flesh or meat) gets worms,'<sup>4</sup> Now, thou who art thoroughly conversant with the style used by our sages, must satisfy my literary curiosity, for I have seen persons buy plenty of flesh ('basar') without its raising vermin, because what they don't use immediately they salt and put away." "Ah! you seem not to be aware of what shrewd commentators have discovered in this passage," was the answer; "it is, according to them, a wholesome advice to butchers not to get in the

<sup>1</sup> Genesis iii.6. [G]

<sup>2</sup> Proverbs xxxi.18 [G]

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah lv.1. [G]

<sup>4</sup> Abot ii.8 [G]

## ITALIAN HEBREW LITERATURE

summer months much more meat than they can readily dispose of."

But the puns on words spelled differently and pronounced by the Italian Jews (Minhag Italiani) alike, as "zetim" (olives), and "zedim" (arrogant), "eben" (stone) and "avon" (iniquity), "hazir" (grass), and "hazir" (swine)—that *jeu de mots* running through this canto—cannot in the slightest degree be reproduced.

The twenty-third canto portrays the ailments and mortification of a poetaster. He had applied to Immanuel, noted for his medical skill, and had received some prescription, with a peremptory order to shut himself up in his room, with the view of excluding any air, and to abstain from the slightest exertion, whether bodily or mental; but, instead of following the direction, he walked out, and, what is worse, sat up the whole night to indite some doggerel songs, which he dignified by the name of "poem". In the morning the physician called to see the effect of the medicine. To his great astonishment, he was told that it had had none at all. While perplexed, in thinking what could have been the cause, the sick man unfolded a scroll, and submitted his nocturnal cogitations to the judgment of his learned visitor. The problem was solved. The physic administered could not have operated, because the necessary rest was not taken. Vexed at this, and annoyed perhaps at listening to senseless verses, our poet poured the whole vial of his biting sarcasm on the head of the luckless rhymers. The latter, confused and burning with rage, had assumed a threatening attitude. Immanuel, fearing a rupture, left quickly, and, meeting the prince, related, amid fits of laughter, all that had occurred. The patron relished it exceedingly, and said that the rich fun was spoiled somewhat by the reflection that his protege had lost his fee, besides having incurred the expense of the drugs he had compounded for the medicine. But Immanuel remarked that he would send in a bill; and, if payment was refused, he had determined to expose the scribbler in a fashion he would little like. The bill was presented, but no fee came.



The prolific writer then cut the delinquent to the quick with his trenchant wit. Dishonesty and presumption were made to take a personal form, and to cling as inseparable companions to Joseph the stingy poetaster.

The prince smiled with complacency at such versatility of genius, and Immanuel related how much he owed to it in his youth, when, by his quick intellect, he won the fairest among the maidens of his people, for she repaid with glowing affection the readiness with which he had solved a proposed riddle. "But," jestingly interposed the prince, "since you became old and rheumatic, the flashes of your intellect are not quite so bright." "Aye; they are as vivid now as when my body was in its prime," rejoined the poet. "These weary feet will not carry me the distance I was wont to run, but this mind reaches the point it ever attained, and it is *not* fatigued. The tenth part of my effusions has yet been scarcely read. Let me rehearse a composition I indited in Ancona, just at the time I was unable to rise from my bed." Here follow some lines descriptive of irksome hours spent while stretched upon a sick couch, and others in which the attending physicians are lashed without mercy for their quackery.

The perusal of these leads him to speak of a certain Kalonimos<sup>1</sup>—a high officer at the court of King Robert—who united in himself the adroitness of a diplomatist, the acumen of a philosopher, the erudition of a sage, and the brilliancy of a poet. Immanuel extols his excellencies in rhythmical prose and in verse; and, directing a letter to a R. Samuel, who lamented the long absence of Kalonimos from his native city, our author grows boundlessly enthusiastic on

<sup>1</sup> Kalonymos ben Kalonymos, a Provencal scholar, was born at Arles in 1286. His most notable work is the "Eben Bohan", an ethical treatise completed in 1323, probably while he was visiting Rome. This work deals with moral conduct and is at the same time a satire on men and conditions of the author's time. Another treatise "Maseket Purim" is a parody after the Rabbinic style and diction, mercilessly criticising many of his contemporaries (Vogelstein und Rieger, l. c., 442-444; Gudemann, l. c. 122-125). [G]

the rare qualities which adorned that coreligionist. In elegance of style, not dissimilar from that of his contemporary, the famous Penini (Bedrasi—called also Badrashi)<sup>1</sup> in the "Behinoth Olam," (a philosopho-theological essay), he depicts the benefits flowing from the residence of so illustrious an Israelite in Rome, the public duties which detain him there, and his avowed wish to return home—an event to which he himself looked forward with delight, but the Jews on the Tiber with exceeding regret.

If the pen, which the genius of Hebrew poetry wielded, had traced only the twenty-fourth canto of this unique volume, we might incase it in a golden casket, that all lovers of literature might see and admire it. Free from any metrical composition, that canto of rhythmical prose is eloquence pouring forth her rarest treasures, and laying them at the shrine of friendship, religion, and patriotism. A parent that, like the bereaved Zedekiah, whom Immanuel addressed, reads it on the day of affliction, will raise his tearful eyes upward, and bless Him "that woundeth and bindeth up." For each line proffers for acceptance a cup of consolation. And how tender and persuasive at once the counsel which reunited two hearts, sundered while the sound of nuptial gratulations still re-echoed. How graphic the description of a journey across the Apennines, to visit the two lovely beings whom nature had intended to be inseparably joined; of the disappointment at having sought and not met them, of the keen sorrow at the tidings of the decease of her in whom beauty and virtue contended for supremacy! Delightful it is to see one who had often exercised the marvelous powers of his imagination, to disparage woman's character, weave a garland and place it on the tomb now of an exemplary mother; anon, of a chaste maiden in Israel. We forgive and almost forget the flippancy at times observed in Immanuel's writings, when we

<sup>1</sup> Jedaiah ben Abraham Bedersi was born at Beziers about 1270 and died about 1340. He was the author of a number of poems and also philosophical treatises. The appellation "Penini" he assumed in his poems (Jew. Ency. II, 625). [G]

notice his anxiety to act as a peace-maker. The letter sent from Ancona to Rome, to dissuade the congregation of that city from carrying out an objectionable resolution, proves him a disciple of Aaron. A slight defect in it is the evident desire to evince, by prolixity, great erudition in Talmudical literature; but it may be overlooked, considering that, very possibly, the communication prevented a national evil. For, had Rome insisted upon compelling our brethren who had emigrated elsewhere, indiscriminately to pay towards the support of its community, some might have become estranged from the Jewish fold.

The twenty-fifth canto represents a scene so ludicrous that it would force a laugh from grim Diogenes. Purim has again paid its friends the annual visit. A jolly company who have made the most of the festivity, are assembled. "Confusion worse confounded" reigns supreme. We almost hear the din of drunken songs, the jingling of the tambourine, the jumping, and thumping, and romping, mingled with the antics of clowns, and the jokes of the would-be *improvisatore*. Immanuel, full of piquant railleries, draws around him eager listeners, and to some, whose senses Bacchus had not yet stolen away, he relates the history of a sybarite whom he had known in former years. The expressions are loose, the similes drawn from the spring of foulness, and yet so much spirit and fire run through that narrative, that the reader's mind is drawn irresistibly along after that which his sober judgment condemns. A redeeming feature will be discovered in the closing stanzas of the metrical poem. Contrasting intemperance with moderation, he sees the virtue of sobriety taught by the Divinity in the water course of rivers and of lakes; but, as if suddenly recalling his last goodly thought, he entertains his audience with "the story of eighty elders." He professes to have it from tradition, and gives out as a fact that, in the city of Heshbon on the eastern side of the Jordan, a resort for the learned had been established, and there, on the occasion of the festival of *Simhat Torah* (Rejoicing of the Law), eighty scholars resolved to extol the juice of the grapes in the presence of

their chief, the President of the College. Here the sparks of wit fly in all directions—now vividly bright, anon tarnished with wreaths of smoke. The Biblical sentences are made beautifully to chime in with the ideas held out, but not infrequently they receive a perverted application, which illustrates wantonness.

He who begins a perusal of the twenty-sixth canto may be apt to stop short, and resolve to proceed no further. If he does so he will be the loser; for, what opens in a style seemingly frivolous, continues and ends with a dignity of diction and a sublimity of sentiment rarely excelled. The prince and the poet sauntering along meet several women, whose cheeks are furrowed with the wrinkles of old age, and whose unostentatious garments denote a total relinquishing of the world of fashion. They are recognized as former beauties, for whom chivalry would have broken many a lance. The salutations exchanged are neither warm nor cordial, for the unwelcome incident becomes the mirror reflecting likewise the gradual decay of the rich Maecenas and his gifted Virgil. At this, Immanuel pours forth laments, which re-echo in the hearts of his patron, and both agree that the painful alteration witnessed that day on countenances once so blooming and so fair, should teach all to make ready for a voyage "to the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns." "But", observed the poet, "a silent walk through the valley of dead bones, amid that vast charnel house, where the envied possessor of millions lies together with the pitied indigent, where youth and talents, senility and wisdom, carelessness and clumsiness, are hidden in the dust; in that final dwelling-place, we shall hear and see that 'life's but a span'."

The prince is seized with a tremor, and, as he listens to the thrilling description of bride and groom entering the chamber of death: of children, the hope of their parents; of wives, the sole joy of their husbands; of rulers, the sustaining power of countries, descending early into the grave, he vows to cast off human pride as pollution, and asks his companion, whether the possibility of being soon compelled

to bid the dear ones on earth a last farewell has often intruded upon his thoughts. The answer brings an assurance that all occurrences, all surroundings, the very night which succeeds the day, the very bed on which he stretches his weary limbs, call aloud: "Men remember! Ye are mortals!"

"But has the bent of your mind been always as at the present moment? I am candid enough to confess that the feelings I now experience are unusual with me," remarked the prince.

Immanuel said: "Nay, kindest of friends! I, too, dreamt that my abode here below was built upon a rock. I, too, believed that the angry billows of time would never reach it; that my stay was eternal; and, wondering at my folly, wrote a song, which I will presently rehearse."

The prince is softened into extreme humility, and prays that, since he cannot summon sufficient courage to go and receive instruction from those who rest within their sepulchres, he may obtain it from his fond associate, in the form of an invocation to the God of all flesh. This soul-stirring orison would grace the Jewish ritual. Highly calculated to arouse sentiments of repentance and contrition, it might rank, respecting its expression and character, with that, variously attributed to Hai Gaon and Saadia Gaon, which is introductory to the evening service for the Day of Atonement, *לך אלי חשוקתי וכו'*. A repetition puts the prince into such a frame of mind, that he requests to be led to a cemetery, where he may learn to prepare for quitting the world and its vanities. The poet replies, that he will not press the suggestion made before, if his patron will only follow him to an inner chamber of his own dwelling; for there will he find skeletons and skulls—a standing menace to the wicked, a warning to the reckless. Especially will he be taught by a dead man, who will hand him an open letter, having the power to destroy the passions and to quicken virtue.

The prince looks incredulous. He will not believe that Immanuel has surrounded himself with such somber objects. "Surely you are jesting," he exclaimed, "else I would ere



this have heard the contents of that wondrous letter." "You shall hear it when delivered by the right messenger."

Immanuel's house is reached. Against the walls of a hidden chamber pithy lessons on mortality are engraven. The eyes of the beholder follow them intently. Of a sudden a noise resounds, as of a body dropping powerless on the floor. The prince has swooned away with dread. He saw the figure of a deceased being, on whose flesh vermin fed, and between whose emaciated fingers a paper was tightly held. The poet draws a curtain over that terrifying spectacle, and carries to another room the affrighted visitor. No sooner has the latter revived than he flees apace, as if haunted by a spectre. The poet goes in search of him, and reassures his spirits. When the excited feelings have subsided, he recites the contents of the open letter. The dead, addressing the living, cries forth:

"Oh! thou that sleepest on the softest bed,

Look! e'en with thy flesh will these worms be fed, etc."

The whole composition is admirable; and, notwithstanding its being metrical—a style wherein Immanuel did not particularly excel—it flows smoothly and with thrilling harmony. The prince readily forgives the event, which has terrified his senses, and the two friends separate with tokens of mutual esteem.

The twenty-seventh canto purports to be an incident that happened in Vienna. The prince and the poet took a walk around the city, and lighted on a group of Israelites, who whiled away their time, during a holiday, in discussing subjects on history, on travels, on politics, but all without system, and in a manner that a passer-by might construe to be a quarrel rather than a diversion. The two Italian strangers accosting their German coreligionists, said:—"Brethren! this is not a becoming celebration of our sacred festival. Let us devote it to a calm and intelligent discussion of some topic which will exalt the mind." Perfect silence attended this address, and the poet and his patron launched into an exceedingly long dialogue about the natural functions, influence, and every conceivable and inconceivable

capacity of the then known seven planets, and of the twelve signs of the Zodiac, supposed to have an almost absolute power over the affairs of mankind. Such a display of recondite knowledge strikes the hearers with amazement. It fills them with reverence for its possessors; and, as these retire, some twenty persons call at the hotel, where they had taken rooms, to own their admiration, and at the same time to enquire whether they were as familiar with poetry as they have shown themselves to be with science. Immanuel immediately replies in the affirmative, and each tries his skill in various ways: some by frivolous narratives, others by ethical and metaphysical questions, to all of which he gives in rhyme a fitting and satisfactory application.

The twenty-eighth and last canto pictures a subject as novel in Hebrew literature as it is startling. "*La Divina Commedia*" had just issued from the plastic mind of Dante. Its influence on the fervid imagination of our Immanuel was magical. The friendly intercourse said to have existed between the father of Italian poesy and the greatest of Jewish satirists,<sup>1</sup> may have lent wings for a lofty flight. It has even been suggested that the death of Alighieri gave origin to this weird composition, and that the immortal Tuscan figures conspicuously in it under a fictitious name. Be that as it may, all will recognize therein an idea drawn from a spring which does not flow in Israel's domains. We are asked to accompany the writer through infernal regions, and thence travel onward to the place reserved for him in the abode of blissfulness. He does not tell us the name of the illustrious personage whose decease filled his heart with dismay, recalled the follies of youth, and showed the yawning grave ready to fasten him in its cold embrace. But suddenly an apparition rises. The spirit of Daniel has been evoked by the poet's genius.

Like Virgil to Dante, so does "the man greatly beloved" become the celestial escort, leading his cherished disciple,

<sup>1</sup> There has been a great deal of discussion among Jewish writers regarding the relation between Immanuel and Dante; see Gudemann, l. c. p. 114 ff. [G]

unscathed, amidst burning sulphur and rolling glaciers. The description is thrilling. Not to use old mythological Charon, ferrying the souls over the Acheron, fancy raises a rickety bridge, at the extreme end of which a small gate is guarded by a flaming sword whirled in an invisible hand. Men and women, loaded with sin, are forced through that gate to be precipitated into depths of liquid fire. The poet and his guide stand still, mournfully gazing, while myriads, like swelling billows fast chasing one another, roll down, and voices cry, "Woe unto us, all hopes are left behind." To this lament angels of an avenging Deity reply, "Ye godless beings, who disobeyed the Sovereign Maker, and harmed His guileless creatures; go reap the fruits of the evil deeds which you planted. This is the way that leads to sure perdition; pass on, and utter not a sound." Terror-stricken, the poet asks why a fate so dire befell that multitude. And Daniel said, "They are the faithless, who denied the power of the Supreme, and cleaved to falsehood and to vanities. Let us step downward, and thou wilt learn how depravity, in a transitory life, is requited in an existence which has no end." The gate flings back upon its hinges, and they descend. Gloom, appalling and threatening, environs them. As a flash of lightning darting through the sky on a stormy night, intensifies the darkness, so do the bursting flames of an unquenchable fire add horror to the horrid spot. But the Roman Jew, who chose Dante for his prototype, has exhibited less discrimination than the Florentine Christian in the fanciful catalogue of ancient dead burning in the first circle of the labyrinthian Tartarus. He heaps there together the murderous Queen Athaliah, and Nabal, the churlish Carmelite; Peninah, who vexed the pious Hannah, and Jeroboam, the arch-rebel that lured Israel into idolatry; Hippocrates, because he hid away his written lessons on hygiene, and Aristotle because he had believed in the eternity of matter; and scores of other beings whose errors or misdeeds vary infinitely in character and grade.

The second circle, where women, unfaithful to the

nuptial vow, are lifted up by a whirlwind, and cast into a boiling cauldron of melted copper, lead, and iron; and the third, where gamblers writhe in a cave inhabited by lions, vipers, and a host of scorpions, are depicted with terrifying vividness.

But the description of the fourth circle has scarcely its equal in Dante. It presents to view the torments in hell of a man who had garnered riches solely to gratify ambition. And now he is made to see a rival—the husband of his fair widow,—luxuriate in boundless wealth, emblazon with a supplanting name the portals of the palatial mansion he had built, cull the choicest fruits in the gardens he had planted, and cause the woman, to whom he had bequeathed a princely estate, to forget the love of her first espousals. The misery he suffers at that sight, and his expressions of remorse for having purchased by insatiable ambition naught but burning fagots, while he could have won heavenly delights by kindness and charity, harrow the soul. In the fifth circle, heaven-gifted creatures who had learned wisdom, but spurned it to run headlong after human follies, grope in a darkness without dawn. The sixth brings the poet face to face with an aged man of venerable aspect. A crown of thorns encircles his wrinkled brow. Compelled at one time to mount a steep ascent, he is again hurled down. Now is he thrown into a blazing pile, anon, he is dragged out to be bitten by vipers. Agonizing at every pore, his ears tingle with the piercing sound of voices crying, “Thou who didst plunge into the mire of iniquity, wash off the filth in oceans of roaring fire.” But though there follows an elaborate delineation of the atrocious acts which that man committed, the name he bore remains concealed. Were it not for the excessive turpitude attributed to the unknown sufferer, one might suppose that Elisha ben Abuya, or Aher, the apostate teacher of Rabbi Meir, is intended, but to compare the Grecianized sage to King Antiochus or to Manasseh would be, even for Immanuel, apt to deal in hyperboles, a charge entirely too sweeping.

But who are those two beings entangled in the inextricable meshes which their backslidings have woven? The seventh circle holds them in a vise fast together. They dare not move lest their limbs be broken. Two grasping misers, twin in birth and twin in avarice, are thus knit in one bond. They had kept their hands so closely tight that the smallest coin could not possibly slip through. Immanuel's portrait is quaint but remarkably graphic. We gaze upon it, and find mirrored in each lineament the mean wight who loves but self, and lives for self.

The situation in hell of the undutiful child, who struck his father, and reviled her who gave him nurture, our poet's genius has aptly portrayed. In the eighth circle he stands, without the tongue he has ill-used, and the right hand whose power he has abused. Hollow is his moaning, when tossed up as a ball from a well of gall to a dreaded gallows. The ninth circle teems with creatures hanging by their tongues, and thrust at with barbed arrows. Hypocrites have they been under the garb of saints. They sought the highest place in the synagogue, and screeched the loudest. Solely to be seen and heard was their aim, for the wish of pouring out their hearts to the ever-present God never blended with their thoughts.

Terrible is the punishment of thieves and of those who have habitually lied. Suspended by the branches of huge trees they dangle over the tenth circle with their thumbs and their large toes cut off. Rapacious birds feed on their flesh, vultures pluck out their envious eyes.

On reaching the eleventh circle, feelings of anguish overwhelm the poet. Fain would he have averted his eyes from the scene presented. Human bodies stretched on a brick-kiln, and flayed with iron combs, receive a punishment decreed against suicide. They who imagined to escape earthly trials by cutting the thread of their existence, endure tortures too terrific to relate.

Unhappy Hiel!<sup>1</sup> The doom foretold by Joshua to the

<sup>1</sup> II Kings xvi.34; comp. Joshua vi.26. [G]



man who should rebuild Jericho, had crushed his household. Wilful disobedience was paid for by the untimely decease of all his offspring; but the pangs he must have borne on earth did not appear enough atonement to him who journeyed on the wings of fancy through infernal regions. Immanuel meets the bereaved father in the lowest pit, his putrid wounds licked by poisonous reptiles, and torn afresh by serpents. But the antipathy which supplied high colors to draw a hideous picture of the wretched Bethelite, continued unrelaxed in depicting the shocking plight of about one hundred and five men, denizens of the twelfth circle of Hades. They had been deemed pious, benevolent, and zealous; but, in their discharge of the office of congregational wardens, they had wofully fallen short of their duties. They had appointed as Readers at the sacred desk disreputable and incompetent individuals; and, in a burst of indignation, Immanuel exclaims: "How can he be chosen to direct prayers above for all his people, whose mind is chained here below? How dare he stand to represent the children of the faithful patriarchs before the King of kings, who would not be entrusted with a mission to a petty lord?" . . . But darkness impenetrable and bewildering has compassed the poet and his guide. "This is what erudite scholars are condemned to, who would not dispense light to dissipate the clouds of ignorance; individuals who studied only to be petted and fêted because of their great learning." So spoke Daniel while crossing the thirteenth circle. "But why are these trodden upon by the hoofs of fiery horses?" inquired the affrighted traveller, on being lowered to the next circle. "Because their licentious cravings, like that of untamable steeds, knew no bound."

The fifteenth circle rang with the clanking of chains, as of a thousand anvils struck. Men in fetters are attacked by bears. The breath of the cruel beasts smothers, their fangs lacerate the flesh. "Has the God of truth perverted judgment? Were these not the illustrious among the most distinguished for ardent devotion?" And the spiritual escort answered:—"Yes; so they seemed to carnal eyes; for,

in public, they bowed the head as a bulrush, bent the knee, and struck the breast, but their lips *ever* in motion when others looked, *never* opened for a prayer when none but the omnipresent God could hear."

Deeper is the descent to the sixteenth circle, where deceivers of mankind, conjurers, necromancers, and fortune-tellers are stung by wasps, and pierced by swords. Deeper still where, in the seventeenth, they expiate their sin, who, under trials, denied Providence, and breathed curses, in lieu of blessing the Hand which smites to correct. Observing many lower yet in the eighteenth circle, Immanuel is struck with amazement. All had regarded those creatures as innocence personified. And so they were, because opportunities to do wrong had been withheld from them; but could they, unobserved, have indulged in evil, they would have equalled the most obdurate. Close to them, rueful figures flit along, pursued by streams of fire. They had died as martyrs, but when the fatal blow was about to sever the mortal from the immortal, they deprecated their unyielding faith, and wished they had led a life of heedlessness and impiety.

The nineteenth circle makes sport of a wretch that lies in woe. Crushed by an avalanche he is resuscitated to be thrown among live coals. He had robbed a neighbor of his wife's affection, demoralized his children, and opened, by his pernicious example, a flood-gate of vice and of crime. Near the adulterer stood a man whose bones protruded, all cankered and corroded. He had plunged a murderous blade into the breast of a creature made in the Divine image, sent him unprepared before the high tribunal, prevented him from gathering a provision of good deeds, and driven his offspring—left forlorn and derelict—to the path of ignorance and shame.

The twentieth circle is attained. Oh, doleful Muse! Thy bard lies whelmed in a sea of horrors. Shrieks and wails, the storm of hailstones and the raging fire, the whirling of the trenchant sword, and the roaring of the fiercest beasts, have deadened his surpassing genius. But...it

revives. It soars high again. "Sainted guide, who hast led my steps uninjured mid Tartarean vaults, tell thou me what crimes have brought yonder host to sufferings so direful. Tell thou me quickly who they were, for I cannot longer contemplate a spectacle at which my blood congeals. I promise to relate the woful story, and snatch away the living from the path which ends in this terrific deep." Daniel said: "Hear clearly and transcribe with fidelity." We shall spare the reader—who doubtless is stained with none of the sins which Immanuel's imaginary escort points out—the fatigue of a description of atheism, infidelity, perjury, blasphemy, an ill-will occasioning misery and distress, crimes which are instanced as having blackened ineffaceably the soul. We shall rather pass on to the delineation of the feelings of our poet, while he attentively listens to the speaker. His face bedewed with streaming tears, he bitterly curses the hour in which he first was ushered into this nether world. "Wherefore so much dejection?" inquired Daniel. "Why, in viewing the work of retributive justice, art thou so filled with dismay?" "Alas! O man greatly beloved!" rejoins the poet. "I bethink myself of faults I have committed; for the pure soul, given me in mercy, has been pitilessly steeped in pollution. I, even I, have dragged it through defilement, instead of raising it up high where holiness exhales its sweet odor. Will I not also be imprisoned in this valley of innumerable sorrows?" To which the ethereal escort replies: "Let thy agitated breast be calmed. None is sinless, and thou hast offended God by many rash and thoughtless deeds, but thou didst redeem thy character by unequalled industry in the field of learning. Fear not; he that has added sweetness to the bitter cup of everlasting woes; he that has refreshed his neighbor's mind with lessons of divine truths, shall not wither in a shadowy labyrinth."

What follows, repeats that to which the writer of this sketch has had occasion so often to take exception, namely, a high-wrought self-praise, for the possession of natural talents, for goodness of heart, for a disposition to bear

trials without murmur, and for an erudition and a depth of research which had discovered the only veritable meaning of Scriptural passages. This fulsome laudation, put into the mouth of Daniel, concludes with a prediction that, on wending his steps under the lead of his master, towards the abode of beatitude, Immanuel would be greeted by the authors of the various portions of the Bible as the faultless interpreter of their thoughts: "Come then and receive the honor which is thy due;" and our poet answers: "Gentle spirit, draw me out of this spectral land, which has harrowed every fibre of my being." "Lay hold of my garment," quoth the other; "look not back, but upward, and move rapidly on." So went they together.

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A ladder was set upon the earth, but the top thereof reached unto the heavens. "The man greatly beloved" and his disciple mount step by step. The higher the ascent, the more glorious is the scene which breaks upon their vision. A sun brighter sevenfold than the luminary made "to rule the day" lightens the serenest sky. A gentle zephyr diffuses the fragrance of wonderful plants. "As through a crystal case the figured hours are seen," so are the joyous thoughts that roll within the mind of each dweller of Elysium glowingly transparent. At intervals they burst forth in hallelujahs, till the Empyrean rings with a seraphic choral. Immanuel recognizes among the blessed ones, Biblical and Talmudical characters. He beholds his favorite Charizi in spiritual communion with the soul of Hebrew poetry—Judah Halevi. His mother, Giusta, delights in Eden with his mother-in-law, Brunetta. His early teacher, Benjamin, and his contemporary, Rabbi Buzeccho,<sup>1</sup> jointly contemplate the essence of the Deity. But here and there in that beatified assemblage, he sees many clothed in majesty, yet unknown to fame in the domains of Israel. "Master, who are they of so imposing

<sup>1</sup> Menahen Bozecchi, probably an uncle of Benjamin, mentioned by him in his commentary to Isaiah xxxiii. [G]

an appearance, whose names and deeds have never reached my ears?" And Daniel answers: "These were not born in the true faith, but they sought with their intellect to discover the First Cause, and honored it under various appellations, still learning their duty from the knowledge attained, and following right as far as understood."

Springing from height to height, vacant thrones of sapphire, whose foot-stools shone like polished amber, are seen prepared for distinguished comers. Our poet desires to sit upon the most conspicuous, but he is informed that it was reserved for Leon Romano.

Graceful is this tribute of respect to superior genius and to moral excellencies. Immanuel never proved himself so noble-minded as when he placed Leon Romano, the elegant writer and generous benefactor of his race, foremost among the greatest. Equally admirable and touching is his acknowledgment of the learning and virtue of his brother (called also Daniel<sup>1</sup>) for whom he bespeaks a lofty place in the realm of the saints. He deems that a just reward for the lessons received at his hands, both in sacred lore and in right conduct. The mellifluous words and exalted style which have preserved the memory of those two worthy sons of Israel in this unique book, cover up many a blemish with which a careless hand has stained it.

But now the traveller observes and stands aghast. He descries human beings shunned on earth for their great wickedness, rejoicing in the association of the upright and godly. "Far be injustice from the universal Lord," exclaims the wise escort. "Sufferings, excruciating and prolonged, endured, without a murmur, as an atonement for repeated sins; feelings of profound shame and of intense contrition, silent confessions and heartfelt entreaties, gained for these the felicities of paradise."

<sup>1</sup> This Daniel was not a brother of Immanuel but probably a friend and a benefactor. Some seek to identify him with Dante (Geiger) but this supposition is not generally accepted. It is more likely that Daniel was the name of his benefactor (See Gudemann, l. c., p. 114 and note VII; Vogelstein und Rieger, l. c., 423, 438). [G]



Can sorrow dwell where eternal joy wields the sceptre?  
Can man bide in heaven and still suffer the torments of hell?  
Immanuel answers these queries in the affirmative, by the following paradoxical description. Sackcloth and ashes covered the body of a noted sage; bent was the head, the lips inaudibly spoke the words of lamentation; but he has descried the poet. The streaming eyes cease to weep. "Welcome" is the friendly greeting. The twain had known each other long. Immanuel's acquaintance had been distinguished on earth for talents and for the liberal distribution of his wealth, but a fit of uncontrolled ambition had led him to exchange the sweets of home, the admiration of scholars, and the pleasures of congenial associations for the promise of a fabulous fortune in foreign climes. He traveled far, and embarked in commercial speculations, which proved disastrous. Impoverished and broken in spirit, he pined away, and found a grave in the land of the stranger, bequeathing to his wife and children naught but misery and its melancholy sequel—death. One of his sons survived the catastrophe, and for him the man mournfully prayed, and humbled himself before the throne of grace. The poet opens a fountain of delight, where only tears had gushed forth. He tells the sage that his living child had been successful, had acquired proficiency in the Law, and won repute for his name; and that he himself would extol his merits, and strive to make him famous. At this the afflicted father is suddenly transformed into a triumphant saint clothed in light, and crowned with glory. Joining the blissful throng, he cries aloud till the empyrean echoes forth the sound: "Immanuel hath come!" David then steps forward, accompanied by Asaph and Jeduthun. Melodious chords are struck on harp and lyre. The sons of Korah blow their silver trumpets, while the anointed of the Lord folds the poet in his arms. At his bidding all the expositors of the book of Psalms convene, and together proclaim Immanuel the prince of commentators. Ezekiel hears the acclamation, and makes the shouting swell higher, when he declares that none had understood his delineation

of the chariot, with its multifarious figures and wheels, so well as he who now stood alive in their midst. His words have scarce been uttered, when Jeremiah, with Elijah on the right, and Elisha on the left, approaches, and pays homage to the prolific writer who had penetrated the meaning of his inspired effusions.

Isaiah also gives a solemn assurance that the portals of Elysium are open to admit him who had best known how to gather honey from the flowers of the prophet's planting. But it is now Solomon's turn to speak. He has brought in his train the Minor Prophets, and he draws from them the confession that none has rivalled Immanuel in unfolding the proper sense of the Scriptural text. The poet is carried forthwith to the presence of the greatest Seer. A dazzling light encompasses the brow of Amram's son, but Moses veils his countenance, and communes with the visitor. He predicts that because the Roman scholar had so lucidly explained the text of the Pentateuch and of the Book of Job, he would hereafter become beatified. Solomon chimes in, bestowing surpassing encomiums on the interpreter of Ecclesiastes and Canticles.

Finally, a stately figure appears, followed by eleven beings of majestic aspect. Joseph and the heads of Israel's tribes have come. All stand aside to let the teacher of forgiveness draw nigh. He bends the knee before the man who had ascended the summit of Sinai, and the Arch-prophet salutes the savior of his age with accents at once tender and sublime. Joseph recognizes the poet, and exclaims: "In him I acknowledge the Hebrew who has represented me with fidelity, and without flattery." He adds that the fame of Immanuel has reached the utmost bounds of the region of bliss, and that because of his fervid imagination, his choice diction, and the rich tropes and similes he fittingly employed, his name has already been immortalized in the world of spirits, as it is in the republic of letters.

With steps made lighter by so joyous an announcement, the poet moves on until his vision rests upon ten golden canopies. Curtains of purple hue, bespangled with

jewels, at whose brilliance a meridian sun would pale, hang down upon the sides. "Sainted friend, who hast led me forth mid paths untrodden by the living, say now, who stands beneath those splendid arches?" And Daniel answers: "The ten martyrs of our holy faith." . . . "Oh! let me become beatified by their gaze." . . . "Nay; they have just departed hence. The righteous scion of Levi—Samuel our judge—and Judah the Prince of our traditions, have joined them also, under the guide of Michael, the archangel. They together lie prostrate before the King of kings, imploring grace and pardon for the remnant of the captivity, that the distressed may receive enlargement, and the Divine presence be restored to Zion. But follow me, and I will show thee five canopies spread out for five of thy companions, who are still numbered among the inhabitants of the terrestrial globe." . . . "Wilt thou name the happy beings for whom that glory is reserved?" . . . "Attend and fasten my words upon thy memory." . . . Here the reader's mind is feasted with a glowing portrait of human virtue, which distinguished five of Immanuel's contemporaries.

In the first, who lived at Perugia, the most shining qualities were unswerving adherence to truth, deep humility, a peace loving disposition, and charity, which covered all under the broad folds of its mantle. The second had signalized himself by zeal for the promotion of the welfare of his people, and by a generosity which invited to a hospitable board the stranger and the needy, and sweetened the repast with gracious manners. The third had by his influence averted a political storm, threatening to burst upon the head of the Jewish community in Italy, had risked his life to pacify inveterate foes, and had obtained for his brethren the boon of safety. The fourth had stood by Immanuel in time of sad reverses, had evinced his attachment by assuming the transcription of many of the prolific author's writings, and had proved equally liberal to others with his means and with his knowledge. The fifth with whose name the reader might have specially desired to become acquainted is described in impassioned language as a poet, renowned

for his effusions both in Hebrew and Italian, as a gallant soldier, as a diplomatist, as a keen reasoner in defending persecuted Israel, and as the favorite of potentates.

Doubtless, these five notables were, in the thirteenth century, subjects of praise among their fellow-believers, and needed not explicit mention, but to their successors a record of their names would have been welcome. Our author denies us also that gratification, when in a burst of religious enthusiasm he delineates the character of two celebrities in Orvieto, who deserved well of all the disciples of Moses and the Rabbis. For endless had been their benefactions, and universal the lustre they had reflected on the dispersed of Judah. But to Immanuel the memory of their deeds was the kindling of genius. Towering high it beheld Eternity come forth to crown Piety; seraphs and cherubs do reverence to virtue.—“Happy mortal, thou hast surveyed the past, and scanned the future! To thee was Hell disclosed, and Paradise unfolded, that thou mightest learn and teach. Trace the lesson on adamant, that time may not erase it. Rehearse it within the hearing of the living, until it be their ruling thought. And I that love thee well, will uphold thy hand and sustain thy speech with orisons to the Sovereign Creator.... Thy sins have been forgiven....Thine end will be serene. Thou wilt close thine eyes on earth, to reopen them in regions where light is never dimmed.”

Daniel has given his last utterance. Fain would the poet have kept fast upon the garment of the man of God, but a whirlwind arises. The ethereal escort vanishes, and he who travelled on the wings of fancy lands on the shores of reality.

#### IV. ELIAS DEL MEDIGO

In the last quarter of the fifteenth century,<sup>1</sup> the subject of this sketch taught theology and philosophy in Padua. A spirit of liberality, which Catholic Italy has not always manifested, raised the Jewish savant, when yet in his youth, to the chair of professor at a public academy. There he, doubtless, won golden opinions, for the most renowned of Italian scholars, who travelled in quest of still greater knowledge, became his pupil. "The marvel of learning and genius," as Pico della Mirandola was called by his contemporaries, sat at the feet of Elias Del Medigo, at the Padua academy.

The distinguishing characteristics of the professor, the keenness of intellect and depth of thought he evinced, rendered him a centre of attraction to all lovers of letters. This circumstance, bringing the young Paduan in close contact with a vast number of non-Israelites, may perhaps have given rise to a suspicion that his interest in philosophy exceeded his interest in religion. At all events, we find him involved in lengthy and warm disputes with a very eminent Rabbi of his time, Judah Mintz.<sup>2</sup> Whether the controversy had reference to ritual questions, cannot now be ascertained, but it is evident that, notwithstanding the

<sup>1</sup> Delmedigo was born in Candia in 1460 and died there in 1497. He was appointed to the Professorship at Padua, when he was only twenty-three years of age and held this post for only a brief period. As a result of opposition against him in different quarters, he was obliged to leave Italy and to return to his native town. After a short sojourn there, he died at the early age of 37, as a result of an operation (See Jew. Ency. IV, 506-7). [G]

<sup>2</sup> Judah ben Eliezer ha-Levi Minz was Rabbi of Padua for forty-seven years. In his quarrel with Delmedigo, he was supported by Elijah Mizrahi. His writings were all destroyed in the sack of Padua, which occurred soon after his death. Only sixteen of his responsa were later discovered and included in a collection of responsa of his grandson, Meir Katzenelenbogen and these contain many interesting data about the history and customs of his time. (Jew. Ency. VIII. 604-5) [G]



ordinary caution of Del Medigo not to offend public opinion, he must have met the displeasure of some of his coreligionists. Kabbalism was then in high repute in Italy. Any Hebrew daring to impugn the genuineness of the Zohar, or criticise practices founded on the sayings of that book, had to bear the brunt of prejudice, and submit to being considered a man of little faith. Del Medigo, imbued with the teaching of Saadia Gaon, having shown himself a staunch defender and disciple of Maimonides, could not give his assent to prevailing notions. Clear reasoning was his gauge; therewith he measured Judaism, and found it not wanting.

Many books, reflecting the perspicuity of his mind, issued from his pen, but they shared the fate of others, which time—in the absence of the printing press—has consigned to oblivion. An astronomical essay is preserved in manuscript in the Oppenheim collection of rare books.<sup>1</sup> Three volumes in Latin on “The Unity of the Supreme Intelligence,” “The Prime Cause,” and “The Essence of Creation,” are said, by one of his descendants,<sup>2</sup> to exist, together with valuable annotations on the works of Ibn Rashd (Averroes). But of all the compositions attributed to Elias Del Medigo, none is so generally known as his “Behinat ha-Dat” (Religion Examined).

<sup>1</sup> The Oppenheim collection of Hebrew books and manuscripts is the basis of the great Bodleian Library at Oxford. It originally belonged to David Oppenheim, Rabbi of Prague, who was one of the most important figures in Jewry, during the latter part of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries. His library, which was the most famous collection at the time, was later (1829) sold to the Bodleian Library. It numbered about 5400 volumes, dealing with all branches of Jewish learning. [G]

<sup>2</sup> Possibly Joseph Solomon Delmedigo (1591–1655), although the exact reference is not known to me. Some of these essays were published. The work of Delmedigo containing the essays mentioned here, together with notes on Averroes, was published in a volume, Venice, 1501, while several of his translations of Averroes have also been published, although some are still in manuscript in the Paris Library (see Jew. Ency. IV, 507) [G]

Saul Cohen Tedeschi,<sup>1</sup> an ardent admirer of his teacher, urged him to publish the views he held on Judaism, showing how it harmonizes with philosophy, in order that he might thus strengthen in faith those who wavered, and weaken the power of the advocates of mysticism. Del Medigo's compliance with the request enriched literature with the book aforementioned. It comprises three parts. In the first the author seeks to determine whether the study of logic and metaphysics is obligatory on an Israelite; or, if not obligatory, whether it is permitted. He concludes, that although the Mosaic religion does not demand of its votaries a knowledge of science, which, to the masses, might prove useless, if not dangerous, the attainment thereof is essential to the few leading minds; for 'by it, will they arrive at the correct understanding of the First Cause of all created beings.

He qualifies his position, however, by stating, that whenever science seems to contradict the Scriptures, the learned, like the untutored, must postpone their acceptance of the former. Thus, for instance, notwithstanding that a belief in miracles is not a cardinal principle in the Law, it would be wrong to agree with the theory which stigmatises that belief as unphilosophical, for the Bible has chronicled the performance of wonders, through the will of the Supreme. But should any religion oppose the eternal truths exhibited by the hand of God in nature and divinely implanted in the human breast, or should it gainsay what is evident to all beings endowed with a sound mind, we ought to consider it a false religion. Judaism, however, inculcates nothing abhorrent to reason, unless a heated imagination misrepresents it. The admission of prophecy, of future reward and punishment, may be regarded as an act of faith,

<sup>1</sup> Saul Cohen Ashkenazi (Tedeschi) was born in Candia 1470, and died in Constantinople in 1523. His principal work is a philosophic treatise in the form of questions addressed to Isaac Abarbanel and the latter's replies, published in Venice, 1574. He also wrote a supplement to his teacher's work "Behinat ha-Dat", published in Basel, 1629 (Jew. Ency., II, 201) [G]

independent of reason; but it is not such faith that the intellect revolts against. Then he cursorily proceeds to unfold the beauty of the Mosaic revelation, telling how those who sought to subject it altogether to their own mental analysis, showed themselves neither true theologians nor true philosophers.

The second part contains an exposition of what the author deems cardinal points in Judaism; of their number; and of the propriety of distinguishing what is essential from that which flows from it, as a streamlet from the main source. With respect to this topic, Del Medigo follows precisely in the wake of Maimonides, striving all along to support himself on passages from Holy Writ, or on Rabbinical dicta; and, like the great master whom he chose as a model, our author admits that neither the knowledge of the principal creeds, nor the literal word of the Mosaic legislation, constitutes Judaism. He contends, with much force, that the necessity of generalising the Mosaic prescriptions implies the acceptance of traditions and the rules of logic laid down by the Sages for the application of the Law. While upon that subject, he alludes to the sect of Karaites, whom he charges with self-contradiction, because, rejecting Rabbinism, they are tossed on a sea of doubts by the unsettled opinions of their own religious chiefs. Assuming the defence of Talmudists, he deprecates nevertheless the redaction of the Mishnah, and kindred works, as tending to hamper, in a measure, the actions of an ecclesiastical court; for, whereas formerly it was guided by general principles applied to circumstances, now it must abide by the written decisions. This he considers a drawback.

But he sees no evil equal to that which the sect of Kabbalists perpetrates. He conceives that all must agree in calling it mischievous. Literalists and traditionalists, philosophers and logicians can but scout the idea of fastening upon the Scriptures a meaning foreign to them, contrived through numerical combinations, or the initials of some words in the text. Reason, moreover, is shocked by the ideas set forth,

touching the Sephirot, or emanations, which have been variously regarded as Divine Powers and as Mediators. And Del Medigo, determined to overthrow the bulwark of Kabbalism, attacks the Zohar, arguing from internal and external evidences, that it is a spurious work; and he emphasizes the fact that although attributed to the ancient sage, R. Simeon Ben Yohai, it was made public only within the last three hundred years (about the eleventh century).

After having employed his sharp intellect against the Zoharists, our author turns it against the would-be philosophers of his time. He upbraids them for having distorted the signification of the Torah, in their endeavors to reconcile it with the speculations of theorists. He judges it equally absurd and destructive to attach rationalistic views to the sayings and deeds of Moses, as to enshroud them in mysticism. And he laments furthermore the abuse made of the pen; for, instead of withholding from the multitude a great deal apt to be misapprehended and misapplied, every scholar seems anxious to give publicity to his own construction of the Law. This leads Del Medigo to speak of the bold figures and legends of the Talmud, which, having been written down, ought to be explained in part, when they convey useful lessons, and remain unexplained when the sense is too obscure, or calculated to mislead the minds of the untutored; and, inasmuch as the Agadic portions of the Talmud contain nothing which is binding on a Jew, he can do no wrong by disagreeing with what has been brought to his attention.

The third part of "Behinat ha-Dat" discusses the question of assigning reasons to the precepts of the Law. The author is of the opinion that there must be a reason for every command, and that it behooves us to seek it out when not clearly expressed in the Mosaic code. He maintains that to discharge our religious duties with zeal, and to perfect ourselves as far as attainable, we must know the design of God in ordaining certain rules; but at the same time he counsels caution, and objects to committing such reasons, in every instance, to writing; for they might prove,

after all, mere conjectures, breeding skepticism in the simple-hearted. And, as if fearing he had allowed the human intellect too wide a scope in Biblical researches, he sums up his arguments by reminding the reader that *action* is what Judaism demands of its followers, not speculative philosophy; and that they who imagine to serve Israel's God by abstractions are pursuing the way to perdition. The man of learning who loves religion ought, therefore, to study time and circumstance, and be guided by them in his speaking and in his writing.

The style of the book is studiously concise; its expressions forcible and pithy. In the Vienna edition of 1833, Reggio<sup>1</sup> undertook to comment on it, and add thereto extensive annotations; but, in so doing, he transcended his limits, and rather indited a supplement to his own "ha-Torah weha-Pilusufia", than a mere elucidation of the work of Del Medigo.

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Samuel Reggio was an important figure in Jewish circles during the first half of the last century. He was regarded as a liberal and the Italian Jews looked upon him as an Italian Mendelssohn. It was natural that the liberal views of Delmedigo should attract his attention, as did also the liberal views of Leon de Modena, whose supposedly heretical pamphlet he edited and annotated. The book "ha-Torah weha-Pilusufia", to which reference is here made, is a work in which the attempt is made to reconcile religion with science. Reggio goes a step further and says that religion and science are indispensable to one another. [G]



## V. AZARIAH DE ROSSI

The Italian family of De Rossi boasts of a high descent. That the rude and heartless soldier, miscalled "the delight of mankind," sought to grace his triumphant entry into the "eternal city" by carrying thither some of the most prominent Jews, is certain; but that they who assume to trace their ancestry from the period of Titus can be credited, any more than they who have, at various times, claimed lineal descent from David, is an open question. The lovers of literature, however, care little about Azariah's extraction. When he himself disclaims any title to veneration, simply because of "the ancestral tradition of being one of the four distinguished families, whom Titus exiled to Rome," others may be justified in attaching to it no importance.<sup>1</sup>

The advantage derived from a perusal of valuable writings will neither be increased by the knowledge that the author was the scion of a noble stock, nor lessened by the belief that his predecessors ranked no higher than the bulk of mankind. Suffice that the book "*Meor 'Enayim*" is truly what the name denotes: a light to the mind's eye. De Rossi tells us that he devoted one year to its preparation and half a year to revising and publishing it. To employ an equal time in examining it point by point, and comparing it with more modern productions, which bear on the numerous subjects directly or incidentally treated, would amply repay the student. He would rise a ripe scholar, after having conned a work which makes its reader acquainted with a host of Jewish and Gentile celebrities.

Zunz did not indulge in any hyperbole when he wrote (*Kerem Hemed*, vol. v.) that Azariah De Rossi reached, by his towering mind, the stronghold of error, stormed it and

<sup>1</sup> Azariah de Rossi was born in Mantua in 1513 or 1514 and died in 1578. His family preserved the tradition that their ancestor was brought by Titus from Jerusalem to Rome after the destruction of the second Temple. [G]

levelled it to the ground; that he stands alone among the learned of his days for unwearied industry in collecting and scanning rare manuscripts, and for reviving the memories of teachers of great eminence in ages past. And yet it would be far from the truth to represent the book as perfect. The mere bird's-eye-view that can be had in this sketch will reveal in it several blemishes.

The "Meor 'Enayim" owes its origin to a circumstance which is devoid of interest at this distance of time, but which affected very sensibly the inhabitants of Ferrara in the year 1570.

About ten o'clock at night, on the 18th of November, a terrific earthquake turned men's dwellings into graves. The shrieks of those who fled, they knew not whither, mingled with the moans of the dying. Repeated shocks, on successive days, made large numbers a prey to uncontrollable dread; they sickened, never to recover. Others, abandoning their homes and substance, wandered abroad, as if bereft of reason.

De Rossi gives, in easy style, a graphic description of the event. He believes it a duty to relate to posterity how the power of the Creator had manifested itself. He dilates on the subject, to prove that he does not altogether agree with Greek philosophers, who attribute sudden disasters to natural causes, but argues forcibly and—quoting also Scriptural and Rabbinical authorities, concludes—that the invisible hand of God uses nature—its own creation—to mete out men's deserts. He then branches out to comment scientifically on narratives in sacred and secular works relative to earthquakes, and remarks that what happened to his wife would have confounded an Esculapius and a Hippocrates. She had moved into her daughter's room, shortly before the roof of the house suddenly fell into her own chambers. The fright occasioned turned the color of her skin to a deep yellow, and from that moment she craved for nothing but salt. Bread and salt became to her a most delicious food. Yet that morbid desire he holds to have been her cure. Without taking any medicine her yellow-

ness decreased, and her natural color returned. Thereupon, De Rossi reasons about our ignorance of the wonders of nature, and suggests the possibility that the quantity of pure salt his wife ate destroyed the effect of the saline and sulphuric particles which may have entered her system at the upheaving of the earth.

The calamity, however, which reduced many to poverty compelled Azariah also to leave Ferrara, and take up a temporary abode on the south side of the river Po. There he made the acquaintance of a learned Christian, who diverted his mind from existing troubles by reading a Latin rendering of Aristes's account of the origin of the Septuagint. Unable to understand some obscure passages, he applied to De Rossi, that he might compare the Latin with the Hebrew translation. He was greatly surprised on hearing that there was none, and, considering it a reflection upon the national character, urged Azariah to undertake the task. He agreed to do so, and that led to further literary researches, which swelled into sixty long chapters, aside from the volume containing two separate topics, viz., the narrative of the earthquake, which he termed "Kol Elohim," (the Voice of God), and the translation of Aristes, "Hadrat Zekenim" (Honor to the Elders). The latter, as generally known, is a suppositious communication of Aristes, a confidential friend of King Ptolemy Philadelphus, to his brother Phylocrates. It tells how Demetrius, anxious to enrich the famous library at Alexandria with every work obtainable, advised his royal master to procure the sacred books of the Jews, the contents of which he had heard to be of great excellence. Ptolemy gladly assented, and Aristes, who had always befriended the Hebrew people, seized the opportunity offered to do them good, by saying that since the conqueror asked a favor of the conquered, it would redound to his honor to manumit the thousands whom his father had enslaved. Then, bound by gratitude, the learned in Jerusalem would prepare such a version of the Scriptures as might enhance the value of his vast collection of books. The word created the desired

impression, and the Egyptian monarch, after having paid an immense sum out of his own treasury to ransom all Jewish prisoners, and free all Jewish bondmen, directed a letter, couched in respectful language, to a certain Eleazar, the officiating high priest of the time. He requested that, from each of the twelve tribes, six men, fully qualified to render into choice Greek the laws of Israel, might be sent to Alexandria.

Eleazar responded in terms of extreme humility, and appointed, as ordered, seventy-two individuals of quick understanding, of broad culture, of high standing, fitted in every way to fulfill their mission with credit to themselves and their people. They carried with them to the Egyptian Capital scrolls, whereon the law was written in golden letters, and whose parchment sheets were so wonderfully put together, that none could detect a joint.

During a number of days, the scholars were munificently entertained at the royal table, and they gave evidence of profound wisdom by the solution of questions propounded. Afterwards, Demetrius took the seventy-two elders to a distant island, delightfully situated. There each of them in solitude translated the whole Scriptures in seventy-two days; and, comparing all their various renderings, they adopted, by common consent, the most perfect.

Ptolemy listened with intense interest to what was read. He bowed reverently to the Law, ordered that it be kept with exceeding respect, dismissed the wise men with rich presents, invited them to honor him again with their visit, and, bestowing on Eleazar, the priest, and on the Temple costly presents, sent all the people of Israel greetings. Such is the summary of the epistle of Aristeas to his brother Philocrates. De Rossi accepted it as true in all its details. Modern criticism has seen where it is at fault, and declared it spurious.<sup>1</sup> That a Greek translation of the Pentateuch—

<sup>1</sup> Modern critics consider the Letter of Aristeas a work written by a Jew long after a Greek version of parts, and possibly also of the whole, Bible existed. The date of its composition is variously given

not of the whole Bible—was made under the auspices of King Ptolemy, cannot be doubted. Besides Josephus, Philo, and the fathers of the Christian Church, the Talmud has recorded the incident, somewhat hyperbolically, in the treatise Megillah.<sup>1</sup> But that the so-called Septuagint version of the entire Scriptures should have had the origin related above, is impossible.

Without citing all the incongruities the subject presents, it may at once be perceived that the selection of six men from the twelve tribes is a palpable anachronism, since there existed then only two tribes—Judah and Benjamin. So also the idea of the Law being written with golden letters is preposterous, because contrary to traditional usage. It is not improbable, nevertheless, that to supply the want of the Hellenistic Jews, who had lost, in a great measure, the knowledge of the Hebrew language, a Greek rendering of the Books of Moses was undertaken as early as three hundred years before the vulgar era; that it met the approval of Ptolemy, a patron of learning; and that in the course of time the other portions of Holy Writ were completed by different writers.

Azariah endeavors strenuously to defend his statement in the sequel of the "Meor 'Enayim," and with considerable ingenuity to explain away difficulties of which he is aware. While so engaged, he incidentally exhibits a familiarity with the productions of his predecessors, truly amazing. But conceding that he was a scholar of extraordinary abilities, a ready writer and an acknowledged critic, he failed at times to substantiate his assertions, because he leaned for support on broken reeds. His references to the Book of Eldad, the Danite, on the ten tribes; to the fabulous story about the river Sabbatyon, and to the Zohar, will not, at present, carry any weight; yet these flaws are hidden under the wide-branched knowledge extending through the

by different critics (Kautzsch, *Apokryphen u. Pseudepigraphen des alten Testaments*, vol. II, 131; Thackeray, *The Letter of Aristeas*; Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*). [G]

<sup>1</sup> 9a, b; Soferim I. 8. [G]



whole of his production. That part of it which he styled "Imre Binah," (Words of Understanding), is almost encyclopedic in its nature, but one cannot help taking exceptions to some points.

Thus, in passing his opinion on the character and writings of Philo Judaeus, our author does only scant justice to a very great man. Philo, or Yedidyah, the Alexandrian, as De Rossi calls him, ought not to have been reckoned among those "suspected of unfaithfulness towards God and the sainted teachers." His voyage to Rome to plead before Caius Caligula, in behalf of his brethren, when extermination had been decreed against them for refusing to worship the statue of the self-deified emperor; the pious sentiments with which he encouraged his fellow-believers after having failed in his embassy, prove him faithful to Israel and to God. It must be admitted that his learning does not bear the stamp of holiness; that is, the author did not draw from the language of inspiration, the Hebrew; hence he fell into many errors. And his unacquaintance with the traditions, joined with too strong a leaning to the philosophy of Plato and the Gnostics, caused him to allegorize and mystify the plain words of the text. Still, Philo deserves well of his people, because, as demonstrated in the pages of the "Meor 'Enayim," he wrote copiously and beautifully for the exaltation of Judaism.

De Rossi had no need, therefore, of offering a semi-apology for quoting him with great frequency. The fear he evidently entertained of intensifying the ill-will of such who gave him the appellation of "Adom" (Rossi), "the Adomi" (the Idumean or Christian), on account of his familiarity with men and books of a secular character, ought to have been banished from his mind, when citing Philo, the God-fearing and illustrious champion of his brethren, the Jews. But if the intelligent reader will differ from many of the conclusions of Azariah De Rossi, he must feel thankful to him for that creation of new ideas, which, Prometheus-like, he quickens and sends forth to a high purpose. His daring in controverting accepted notions

about Jewish chronology provoked a violent storm. He stood his ground, entrenched behind unassailable arguments.

Having premised that his views do not involve any departure from religious tenets, he grasps the subject with a mighty hold, handles it in a masterly manner, points out where errors lie, and rebuts the arguments of both friends and foes. With equal cogency he exposes the folly of imagining to do the Sages reverence by accepting literally their bold oriental similes; whereas, such credulity, he contends, is a satire on human intellect, and a weapon of ridicule in the hand of enemies.

De Rossi says that to believe, for instance, that the death of Titus was occasioned by a gnat, which passed from his nostrils into his brains and swelled immensely, till at the end of seven years it burst the head open,<sup>1</sup> would be to credit what is a physical impossibility, and an historical contradiction. Invoking the authority of scientists and of Roman chroniclers to prove himself correct, he intimates that the Rabbinical hyperbole may have been intended as a parable conveying a moral. It may signify the torments which an avenging God inflicts upon those who seek the extermination of Israel; the slight means by which He will achieve prodigious ends. It is to be regretted that in this, as in other instances, our author neutralizes, in a degree, the effect of his broad teaching, by an undisguised fear of men inimical to a critical study of religious matters. Having widened the horizon of our knowledge, he narrows it again by such remarks as the following: "However, should the reader conceive that to admit improbabilities is to extol the powers of the Almighty, (who can accomplish all things,) let what we have advanced be considered as if not written." Was it humility that spoke or dread of being proscribed as a heretic? Both feelings may have blended together, but neither the meekness nor the timidity manifested prevented his book from being fiercely attacked and anathematized.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Gittin 56a. [G]

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Caro, the compiler of the *Shulhan Aruk*, ordered one of

Willing to judge charitably even of those who forbade looking upon a splendid monument of Jewish literature, ascribing the fault more to the times than to the men themselves, one cannot but feel indignant at the unscrupulousness of some, who took advantage of the suppression of De Rossi's productions to steal sparkling gems from the interdicted treasury. As Zunz observes, many bedecked themselves with ornaments belonging to the Italian savant, without condescending to acknowledge the owner.—Ibn Yahia, in his "*Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah*," reproduced as if emanating from his pen, whole chapters from the "*Meor 'Enayim*." What he says of Onkelos, the Chaldaic translator, and Akilas or Aquila, who rendered Holy Writ in Greek; what he sets forth regarding the number of high priests who officiated in the second Temple; respecting the futility of speculating on the time of the final restoration; and touching the prevalence of the Syriac language during the period between the return of the Judeans to Palestine and their dispersion under the Romans, may be pronounced shameless plagiarism. That ungenerous act is the more to be condemned, because the author's diction is not always preserved in its original form, but a coarse pen mars it so as to be scarcely identified as stolen property<sup>1</sup>. Fortunately, much of the intolerance rife in the sixteenth century has been expunged from orthodox Italy. The countrymen and coreligionists of Azariah De Rossi have assigned to him a niche in the temple of fame, while Gentile celebrities quote

the members of his Rabbinical College at Safed, Elisha Gallico, to draw up an order for the consignment of De Rossi's works to the flames. Caro, however, died before he signed this document. Even the Rabbis of Mantua, where de Rossi was known and admired, forbade the reading of his works by young people under the age of twenty-five. (See Graetz. *History of the Jews*, vol. IV, p. 616) [G]

<sup>1</sup> Our author is unduly severe on Gedaliah ibn Yahia (1515–1587). His work "*Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah*" which is a chronicle of the world with special reference to Jewish history, is, as Graetz puts it, "a confused medley of authentic historical narratives and mere fables". He copied from all sources, probably without any intention of making the impression that his work was original. [G]

him as an authority, and recognize as the effusions of his mind what Yahia and his *confreres* have pilfered.

A great desideratum is a critical edition of the "Meor 'Enayim." The pleasure afforded by a perusal of the narrative respecting the conversion to Judaism of Izates, King of Adiabene, and his mother Helene, translated from Josephus and supplemented by a criticism on a passage in Bereshit Rabba, bearing on the same theme; the enjoyment experienced in reading researches on the antiquity of the sacred language; learned conjectures about the vowel points, the singing notes (*Te'amim* or *Neginot*), and the nature of Hebrew versification, would be enhanced by a clear type and a correct text. The Berlin edition abounds with errors, and is printed on very inferior paper. Besides, it shows omissions, which Zunz, in his communication alluded to above, points out.<sup>1</sup> Goldenberg, who published the same in the *Kerem Hemed*, did a valuable service when he reproduced some annotations from an anonymous author, which reveal the erudite mind of the great Rapoport. Among other things, the following is related. De Rossi had a dream. A man stood by him, and voices cried, "Dost thou not see the personage looking on thee? He is a prophet." "If so," said Azariah, addressing the stranger, "if thou art indeed inspired, let me know how long I have to live." "Yet three years," was the answer. In the morning, as the author awoke, he wrote these lines:

על משכבי שוהה  
כסלו שין למד הא  
נדמה לי אומר הא  
לך עוד שלש שנים

<sup>1</sup> The first edition was published in the author's life time, Mantua, 1573-75; the second edition, the one referred to here, was published in Berlin, 1794; another edition, was issued in Vienna, 1829; the best edition is that edited by Zunz, with the supplement of the author's "Mazref la-Kesef", in which he defended himself against his critics, published in Wilna, 1863-66. [G]

לכן כסלו ש'ל"ה  
רוחי אל על יצלה  
אנא רב טוב סלה  
תשלג צלמון שנים

As, tranquil, on my bed I lay,  
('Twas in Kislev, Shin, Lamed, He)  
A vision came. I heard One say:  
"Yet three—and fulfilled are thy years."

Oh, when the third Kislev He sends  
And to its Judge my soul ascends,  
May He whose mercy never ends,  
Let the shadow of death hide my sins.<sup>1</sup>

By the wayside of Mantua the bones of the illustrious writer rested, and on his grave the above inscription was placed, when the dream proved true, in Kislev 5338. Alas! the stone shared the fate of him who lay buried beneath. Both were rudely cast away to some unknown spot by the Italian monks, who sought for more space to build up monasteries.

<sup>1</sup> Shin, Lamed, He equal 335, corresponding to the year 1574; Shin, Lamed, Het, in the second stanza equal 338, i. e. three years later (1577). The author's play on the word שנים, which as the last word of the first stanza means years, and in the corresponding place in the second stanza is used for (scarlet) sins, a translation cannot imitate. [G]



## VI. DAVID NIETO

David Nieto was born in the city of Venice, about the middle of the seventeenth century<sup>†</sup>. The family name points to a Spanish origin. Very probably the sagacious republic, that knew how to profit from the baneful errors of a priest-ridden monarchy, admitted among the exiles from the Iberian territories the ancestors of the subject of this sketch. And fortunate it was that many a scholar, whom a cruel edict had rendered homeless, should have lighted upon the nursery of learning, for a new field had opened in that spot for the culture of the human intellect. The wonderful invention, which created an epoch in the world of letters, could not fail to enchain the attention of those who possessed a literature varied and rich. It was scarcely half a century after Guttenberg brought the art of printing into successful operation, when the press at Venice issued the famous first edition of the Hebrew Bible, with numerous commentaries.

Critical minds had revised the latter, and freed them from the blunders of copyists. But that undertaking, which disclosed in the Jews of Italy abilities of a very high order, was followed by others not less momentous. What the sages of the East had written during the lapse of eight centuries, and the philosopho-theologians of Western Europe had entrusted to manuscripts in the Middle Ages, passed under review, and was offered for the instruction of thousands in the printed pages sent forth by the Jews of the Adriatic. To this day, Rabbinical works, published in the press of Bomberg, or De Gara, or Justinian, are eagerly sought after by the learned.

David Nieto read those volumes, mused thereupon, and acquired the rare gift of imparting the knowledge imbibed, clearly and impressively. In the Academy and on the pul-

<sup>†</sup> In 1654, and died in London, 1728. [G]

pit his talents shone brilliantly; and as a jurist—when Hebrew communities in Italy were governed by ecclesiastical laws (*Din Torah*)—he displayed a keen judgment. The fame of the Venetian Rabbi spread further than his native place: it reached Leghorn, peopled by many descendants of the exiles from Spain and Portugal, and there the accomplished scholar became the head of a college. While a resident of that seaport town in Tuscany, he created a stir by his “*Pascalogia*,”<sup>1</sup> written in pure Italian, and dedicated to a member of the ruling family of the De Medici. That work purposed to show the inaccuracies existing in the Calendar which guided the Roman Church, and the manner in which these might be corrected. It won the author golden opinions among non-Israelites; while his coreligionists, whose standard he labored to raise, gave additional evidences of their appreciation of his efforts.

At Leghorn, where David Nieto taught, the name of the sage is still held in reverence. One can see there at the College “*Reshit Hochmah*” a Hebrew sonnet from his pen, conspicuously placed upon a tablet. It bears the initials of the writer, who evidently composed it to urge the wealthy to give liberally towards the support of teachers and students. To illustrate the idea set forth, the tablet, containing those metrical lines, has on the upper part the picture of a lighted taper, from which many lamps are being kindled; conformably to the saying of Israel’s sages: “*Zeh neheneh wezeh lo hasar*,”<sup>2</sup> viz., the sacred cause may be benefited, without entailing material injury to the benefactor.

But an honor which the Venetian Rabbi richly deserved—though he possibly never anticipated it—was awaiting

<sup>1</sup> The immediate cause which led our author to indite that work appears to have been the unusual occurrence of Easter coming, in 1693, a full month earlier than Passover. Such a discrepancy created a deep impression on the community, and Christians applied to the celebrated Rabbi, anxious to have it explained.

<sup>2</sup> B. K. 20a; perhaps the idea conveyed by the saying “*Ner l’Ehad Ner l’Meah*” (*Shab. 122a*) would fit the picture better. [G]

him beyond the Alps. Through the efforts of the illustrious Menasseh Ben Israel, Jews had been readmitted into England about the time of Nieto's birth. Many families of high standing, from a Sephardic lineage, had settled in the city of London. Barely tolerated, at first, their character and wealth brought to them, by degrees, considerable influence.

At the opening of the eighteenth century, the synagogue in Bevis Marks was already one of the leading congregations of Israelites in Europe. The "elders" of that body, deeming it needful that their spiritual guide be a man noted for his sterling abilities and well-earned reputation, decided upon requesting the Rabbi of Venice, then at Leghorn, to assume that charge. He accepted. In the discharge of his functions, the Ecclesiastical Chief delivered sermons. These, emanating from a ripe and distinguished scholar, attracted much attention; but on one occasion they elicited strictures from the hypercritical, which must have proved galling to the lecturer. He was charged with having expressed opinions savoring of Spinozism.<sup>1</sup> The accusation so troubled the minds of the London parnasim, that they applied to Rabbi Zebi Ashkenazi—a casuistical author of great repute—to pass judgement upon the passages criticized. The answer<sup>2</sup> cleared Nieto from the false imputation, and brought him into still greater favor among his English constituents. An act worth noting in relation with the circumstance just narrated, is that the Italian Rabbi himself has left a pamphlet, entitled "Esh Dat", (Zeal for the Law,) wherein he forcibly opposes the arguments of a certain Nehemiah Hayyun,<sup>3</sup> who had advanced theories of a pantheistic character,

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to Nieto's "Della Divina Providencia, ó sea Naturaleza Universal, ó Natura Naturante", published in London, 1704. [G]

<sup>2</sup> See Responsa "Hacham Zebi", No. 18. [G]

<sup>3</sup> Nehemiah Hayyun (1650-1730) was a notorious character, who created much mischief and strife in various Jewish communities in Europe and Asia, during that period of messianic speculations. He was a Kabbalist and probably a sympathizer with the doctrines of the Sabbathians, although it is not possible to discover whether he had any

claiming they were evolved from the principles underlying Judaism.

But if the slightest suspicion touching the soundness of Nieto's belief was still harbored, it must have been dissipated when he gave the world the largest and, deservedly, most renowned of his writings. He called it "Matte Dan, Kuzari Helek Sheni." Explanation of the quaint appellation, seems necessary.—By the first two Hebrew words the author intended to convey a double meaning: that of "Rod of Judgment," intimating that the work was designed to strike down with the force of argument the opponents of the Oral Law, and also that of "Standard of David Nieto's" (reputation)—מטה signifying both *Rod* and *Standard*, and דן (judgment) forming, like D. N., the initials of his name. The selection of the third word (כחרי) explains the plan followed in the presentation of the subject viz., that of an imaginary dialogue between an Eastern potentate, the king of the Chazars, and the Italian Rabbi.

To many readers of this sketch the idea which our author desired to carry out will be apparent, for they know that in the twelfth century the sublime poet, Judah Halevi, gained still greater celebrity by a masterly production, entitled *Kuzari*. In it he introduces the ruler of the aforementioned country as a convert to Judaism, propounding deep questions to a Hebrew Sage on the history, tenets, and practices of the chosen people, and eliciting from his interlocutor clear and convincing replies.

Nieto, considering that work a thorough defence of the written Law, yet too brief in what concerns the truths of Jewish traditions, undertook to fill up the deficiency, and to do so by adopting the system of his philosophical pre-

definite principles at all. He was unscrupulous to the extreme and even tried to teach trinitarianism and at one time boasted of his ability to attract the Jews to Christiniaity. His controversies with Zebi Ashkenazi are responsible for the establishment of a bitter antagonism between the Ashkenazic and the Sephardic communities of Amsterdam (Jew. Ency., s. v. Hayyun; Greenstone, *The Messiah Idea in Jewish History*, p. 228). [G]

decessor, as most apt to create an impression. He admits, however, at the outset, that the description of his voyage to the land of the Chazars is a fiction, and his several dialogues are simply the thoughts suggested by the objections which the anti-Rabbinites constantly raise.

It would be idle, at this period, to discuss whether Judah Halevi himself invented the original narrative, with a view to attract attention, or whether he founded his book on historical data. It is true that, the very existence of the kingdom of the Chazars has been unreasonably disputed. But whether or not we have the genuine text of the letter received by Hasdai ibn Shaprut from King Joseph, relating minutely the conversion of Bulan, one of his royal ancestors, and of all his subjects, it has been proved that such a letter existed, mapping, moreover, the territories which those proselytes occupied far beyond the confines of Eastern Russia.

Nieto disclaims the ability to pronounce a decision but craves the honor of having supplemented the writing of the immortal Andalusian. His book seems to be the performance of a promise made to the heads of the London congregation, to whom he dedicates it in high-sounding Spanish, as then customary.

The subject matter is divided into five parts, similar to Halevi's work, and elaborately worked out. To say that the reader will see in the second *Kuzari*, Nieto's immense knowledge of theology and science mirrored forth, would be to repeat what has been often expressed. The impartial critic, however, will notice likewise a degree of prolixity not observable in the prototype, and a wish, at times, to prove too much, while learnedly defending the Rabbis. But these flaws cannot lessen the merits of a composition, fraught with invaluable instruction, and it is to be regretted that its character prevents conveying an appreciable idea thereof in a mere sketch. Only a few salient points can be presented, to enable one to judge of the contents. Thus, for instance, in the first part, devoted to establish the truth that laws not mentioned in the Pentateuch were traditionally



known and observed long before the Rabbis wrote, he cites the following among many illustrations. Nehemiah is emphatic about the prohibition of buying on the Sabbath.<sup>1</sup> So determined does that Governor of Judea show himself to enforce it, that he exacts a solemn oath from his people not to be seen on that day in the market-place; and when, despite the adjuration, some of the highest in the land purchase provisions on the Sabbath from heathen venders, he severely censures their conduct as an open violation of the Hebrew religion; ordering, moreover, that the gates of the city be closed from Friday at sunset to Saturday evening. He goes so far as to station guards all around, to prevent traders or merchants from coming in.

Nieto argues that, since the Mosaic code is silent regarding buying or selling on the seventh day of the week, it follows that Nehemiah's firm opposition arose from what had been orally transmitted by inspired men to succeeding generations.

In the second part, whose purpose it is to demonstrate that the Rabbis could not have invented what they term "traditional law," our author calls history to his aid. He says that, as Persia and Babylon lay beyond the dominions of the Roman Empire—which extended westward of those countries—and as Jewish inhabitants there acknowledged neither the Caesars, nor the Patriarch, (or Nasi,) of the holy land, but the ruling dynasty of the Parthians, and their own ecclesiastical Chief, the "Resh Galutha," Palestinian Rabbis could not have exercised over such distant communities a decided influence. This being so, when an Israelite, residing in those climes heard, for example, that the fruit "Hadar," scripturally commanded to be used in the service of the Tabernacle holidays, had been interpreted to mean a *citron*, he would have taken exception, and declared it arrogant on the part of the author of the Mishnah to limit the sense of the word "Hadar," which may as well signify a handsome apple or a fine pomegranate. Yet, not alone

<sup>1</sup> Nehemiah xiii.15-22; x. 32. [G]

did none complain, but all accepted the compilation of Rabbi Judah, the Prince, as a faithful embodiment of that which had been handed down, from time immemorial, for the guidance of future ages.

In the third part, Nieto endeavors to prove that the Rabbis did not dispute about the acceptance of an ordinance orally transmitted, but about the support it does or does not receive from the written Law, or about some minor points connected therewith. Thus, the obligation of reading the *Shema* twice a day, elicits no controversy whatever. It is only when the exact time for its recital in the morning and in the evening is to be determined, that a divergence of opinion arises. In like manner, the injunctions laid down for slaughtering animals whose flesh may be eaten, excite no disputation; all agree touching the main rules. One contends that a defect in the spinal column renders the animal unfit for the use of Israelites, another holds different views; but all agree that a beast killed by the stroke of an axe or diseased in the lungs, is forbidden.

The fourth part may be rightly designated a monument raised to the memory of Israel's olden preceptors. That imaginary colloquy between the King of the Chazars and the Italian Rabbi—exceedingly lengthy and digressive as it certainly is—cannot be too often perused. It unanswerably proves the Rabbis not alone honest of purpose, but versed in all the branches of learning accessible in their days—and greatly in advance of their contemporaries.

Nieto combats the idea that because R. Eliezer recommended his disciples on his death-bed to forbear studying "Higgayon," (a word of very indefinite meaning, rendered variously logic, rhetoric, metaphysics, and so forth), therefore the Talmudists neglected science. Their thorough acquaintance with anatomy is shown in the rules so minutely laid down for examining the entrails of animals, for the search after veins and capillary vessels, etc., in connection with the preparation of meat permissible to Jews. Their knowledge of geometry and trigonometry is shown in deter-

mining the space that must separate diverse plants and seeds, which the Bible prohibits to be sown in the same plot of ground. Their familiarity with what we term pathology is demonstrated by their descriptions of the imperfections rendering an animal unfit for presentation as a sacrifice. Their complete understanding of astronomical calculations is illustrated by a Calendar regulated with such precision, as to challenge the admiration of the learned.

It is singular, however, that our author, who, respecting this last named science, entertains most advanced ideas—believing, for instance, that the planets are, like the earth, inhabited by sentient beings—adheres to the Ptolemaic system, only because of the well-known passage in Joshua, when the sun is asked to stand still until the battle against the allied armies is won by Israel. Exhibiting absolute independence in opposing Aristotle—to whose dictum, even in Nieto's time, scholars bowed obediently; placing himself, on several occasions, in open antagonism to Descartes; quoting even the Epicurean philosopher Gassendi in support of his own reasonings; admitting, in the abstract, the soundness of the Copernican system; he yet refuses to yield to its teaching with regard to the rotary motion of our globe, deeming his so doing impiety; as if Holy Writ, by saying, "the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day,"<sup>1</sup> had not expressed itself as men would speak even now, regardless of well-founded scientific theories. (*Dibberah Torah k' Leshon Bene Adam.*)<sup>2</sup>

The fifth, and most lengthy, part of the Matte Dan opens with a discussion, in which the Rabbis and Copernicus are made to agree on the nature of the atmosphere and the whirling of celestial bodies through boundless space. From that Nieto passes on to explain the Jewish Calendar in the most elaborate and detailed manner. He begins with the known fact that our year is lunar, or of twelve months, each month containing alternately twenty-nine and thirty days,

<sup>1</sup> Joshua x.12,13. [G]

<sup>2</sup> Ber. 31b\_\_ [G]

to suit the periodical reappearance of the so-called new moon; claims for its origin Scriptural authority; maintains that the intercalation of a month (additional *Adar*) seven times in a cycle of nineteen years, has likewise its foundation in the holy volumes; and opposes with cogent arguments the assertion that the Hebrews learned this method—by which Passover happens always in *Abib*, or after the vernal equinox, (about the 26th of March)—from the Greeks, or from the Christian Council that met at Nice (Bithinia) in 325 of the vulgar era.

Then he triumphantly proves the accuracy of Rabbinical calculations, citing the errors of the Julian calendar which compelled Pope Gregory XIII., in 1582, to make October a month of twenty-one instead of thirty-one days, lest Easter might gradually fall in the summer instead of in the spring. The Venetian Sage writes learnedly and exhaustively on this subject, and dwells on the character and necessity of “*Dehiyyot*” (translocations or postponements) through which new moons and festivals are put off for hours, and not infrequently for one and two days. He sets forth the labors of our mathematicians and astronomers, stating what Samuel of Nehardea<sup>1</sup> established, wherein this proved faulty, and how Rab Adda’s keen perception rectified it. He bestows due encomium on R. Hillel,<sup>2</sup> the younger, citing his masterly arrangement, which has offered Israelites, everywhere, an unerring guide for the observance of their sacred seasons.

Alluding to the anxiety of Christians not to judaize their holidays—which led to a needless deferring of Easter—Nieto points out the diversity existing between the Greek and Roman Church, and how far each of them coincides or

<sup>1</sup> Mar Samuel, or Samuel Yarhinai, who lived in the second century and was known as an astronomer (Ber. 58b) is said to have prepared calendar tables. R. Adda, a contemporary of Mar Samuel, is also reputed to have been the author of a work on the calendar. [G]

<sup>2</sup> Hillel II (330–365) formulated and published the rules for fixing the calendar, which had been until then kept as a secret in the patriarchal family. [G]

disagrees with Hebrew computations. His discussion of this topic exhibits his extensive erudition in history, both ancient and modern, and the depth of his knowledge in science. So well panoplied, he defies refutation, and establishes beyond cavil the verity which Gentile scholars now fully acknowledge, namely, "The boast that Israelites make of their exactness in reckoning new moons and seasons, is truly well-founded." (Father Cossali, Professor of Astronomy at Parma in 1802.)

The second Kuzari, of which only a bird's-eye view could be given in this sketch, has a double claim to the admiration of scholars, for it was simultaneously produced in two languages—Hebrew and Spanish. The latter is not by any means a servile translation, but a free and clear version, emanating from the pen of the distinguished Rabbi himself. The Spanish phrases often elaborate what the sacred tongue expresses, as is its wont, concisely; thus enabling the reader to enter more fully into the spirit of the author.

To this, confessedly great merit, the work, as first issued from the press, adds another. It is a model of typography and book making, in its form and its correctness. Printed in London more than one hundred and sixty years ago, that volume, so beautifully produced, reflects honor upon the Bevis Marks Congregation, under whose auspices it was published, and it remains to this day a testimony to the learning, discernment, and piety of their former spiritual leader, the Italian, David Nieto.



## VII. SAMUEL DAVID LUZZATTO<sup>1</sup>

לזכר עולם יהיה צדיק  
אל מול ביתך אקוד ואכרע ברך  
אזכיר צדקתך איש רם עדי אין ערך

In every age the world has produced men whose earliest infancy foreshadowed their future greatness. There was a popular saying in the days of the Talmud:<sup>2</sup> "The healthy growth of a plant may be predicted when yet in its incipient stage"; and verily the present century has scarcely offered a more striking illustration of this adage than in the life of our renowned co-religionist whose pure spirit ascended the heavens on the eve of last Kippur. Like the sage of old, (Rabbah)<sup>3</sup> who, from the sagacious answer of his young disciples, divined the high position they were destined to occupy, so must the parents of Samuel David Luzzatto have formed the brightest anticipations concerning their son, almost from his first utterance. At a period when a child's speech is yet indistinct, he could read fluently the Scriptures in the original text. An occurrence so extraordinary must needs have been regarded as the dawning of a great intellectual light. To whom was entrusted the cultivation of talents so rare?<sup>4</sup> Under what system did a

<sup>1</sup> The appreciation of Samuel David Luzzatto was written by Dr. Morais soon after Luzzatto's death, in 1866, and was published in the *Occident* vol. 23, p. 442 ff. In a note appended to this article in handwriting, probably written many years later, Dr. Morais says: "My knowledge of the history and life-work of Luzzatto was very meagre in comparison with that which I have acquired since I wrote this imperfect biography in 1866. See Autobiography of Luzzatto etc.—". The last refers to Luzzatto's "Autobiographie", translated into German by M. Grunwald, wherein are incorporated many notes by our author. In spite of its admitted imperfections, it was deemed proper to include this appreciation in our collection as it breathes the pure love and admiration of our author for the great Italian scholar. [G]

<sup>2</sup> Berakot 48a [G]

<sup>3</sup> *ib.*, where Rabbah expresses his opinion as to the future careers of his two most beloved disciples: Raba and Abaye. [G]

<sup>4</sup> W. H. Saraval is sometimes called by him "my learned preceptor"; but we have been unable to ascertain whether he alone is entitled to that honorable appellation. [In an additional note published in the

mind so wondrously gifted expand? These are questions which will doubtless ere long be solved by others more intimately acquainted with the history of the late professor in the Rabbinical College of Padua. His autobiography enriched some years since the columns of a Jewish periodical<sup>1</sup> but only the number which relates the peculiar circumstance to which we have just alluded, was offered for our perusal.

We, however, learn from a beautiful psalm he composed, that the paternal hand implanted the seeds which bore luxuriant fruit. The study of the Hebrew Bible was deemed, in days gone by, the imperative duty of every Israelite. In Italy, a man professing our religion must, indeed, have been very illiterate, if he was not familiar with the greater portion of the inspired pages. For how could it be otherwise? At the schools its tuition constituted an object of primary importance. In many synagogues and devotional gatherings, its recital and interpretation invariably followed the evening service. At home, the practice of setting a time apart for learning the Law was almost universal. Our unsophisticated predecessors believed that the most effective means to prevent filial insubordination and domestic strife, was to draw the mind to meditation upon God's holy commands.<sup>2</sup>

But the father of our celebrated scholar possessed the knowledge of the sacred language in more than an ordinary degree; for his opinion on sundry Scriptural passages, as quoted by his son,<sup>3</sup> is peculiarly striking. Although devoted to a mechanical occupation, the descendant of Hebrew poets and philosophers did not neglect that branch of learning in which the family of the Luzzattos had long excelled.

*Occident*, vol. 23 p. 505, our author adds also the name of R. Mordecai Isaac Cologna as one of Luzzatto's early preceptors. [G]

<sup>1</sup> Ha-Maggid, published in Lyck, by L. Silbermann.

<sup>2</sup> Sanhedrin 92a; 'A house in which no words of study are heard will be consumed by fire'. Our author adds the word indicating the interpretation of the word "Fire" as the "fire of strife". In the Talmudic text the word "at night" is added, which is omitted by our author. [G]

<sup>3</sup> See מִשְׁחָרַל page 12.

To him, therefore, is Israel deeply indebted for the developing of that genius now, alas! quenched in death. All honor to such a father! *יעלוו הסידימ בכבוד ירננו על משכבותם*! "The pious shall enjoy glory, they shall sing in their resting places;"<sup>1</sup> but who can add to the fame of the illustrious son?

Learned Germany treasures his productions with those of her Mendelssohn and her Naphtali Hertz Wessely. Italy has assigned to him a place next to her Del Medigo, her De Rossi, and her Leon de Modena; for he combined with intellectual acumen and profound knowledge a flow of diction that forced the mind back to the days in which Hebrew was a living language. Most appropriate is the title of the book of poems which he published in his youth *כנור נעים* "Sweet Harp." Aye, he grasped the harp hanging on weeping willows, and at his touch melodious strains ravished the soul. Lamenting the criminal apathy of Israel to the decaying state of their precious inheritance, he vowed to devote his energies in raising it to the ancient standing. It is inexpressibly delightful to hear him at the age of seventeen conjure his undying spirit to pervade his whole being that he might aspire only to noble attainment.<sup>2</sup> Much has he written, multifarious have been the subjects of which his prolific pen has treated, but every line traced by Samuel David Luzzatto proves his earnestness,—it bears the impress of truthfulness. In an age, when criticism seems directed to undermine the foundations of revealed religion, he was the champion that stood up in its defence.<sup>3</sup> He overturned the subtleties of Eichhorn, the untenable reasoning of De Wette. Burning with zeal for Judaism and with love of God, he buckled on his armor to combat the dangerous theories of Spinoza, spreading fast among some of our co-religionists in Northern Europe; and of a friend, who had eulogized the Dutch philosopher in the language of Holy Writ, he complained, because he had employed an

<sup>1</sup> Psalms cxlix.5. [G]

<sup>2</sup> *כנור נעים* (page 2) *נפשו! עלי על כס, הי שרתי על ערקי כלם, ואל יהלו.*

<sup>3</sup> See *מסחרל* in various places.

elegant style so unsuitably. The same ardor he brought to the task of rebutting the sophisms of the Rationalists and Spinozists, our author exhibited in following Biblical researches.<sup>1</sup> During the year which saw his poetical effusions issue from the press, he began that series of articles on Hebrew synonyms, which, while they are an invaluable acquisition to literature, form the acknowledged attraction of the periodical in which they were inserted.<sup>2</sup> What a vast amount of erudition! What depth of thought in defining with precision the sense of words often misapprehended! How, at a stroke of his pen, seeming incongruities change into harmonies, and obscure passages become clear to the minds of even the untutored! His fame as an eminent philologist spread now far and wide. His excellent Italian version of the daily service and of a portion of the Scriptures, had rendered his name a household word in the land of his birth; his contributions to foreign literature, his ready answers to abstruse questions, his cordial assistance to all men of letters, and, above all, his reputation as a critic of unbiased judgment and unswerving truthfulness, drew toward him the admiration of students and the esteem of the learned. It is not surprising, therefore, that at the opening of the Rabbinical College at Padua in 1829, he should have been chosen to teach there the doctrines of Judaism and Biblical Exegesis.

Endowed with extraordinary abilities, inspired with love for his religion and his people, ever intent upon perpetuating and spreading the knowledge of sacred literature, Luzzatto was the man among his contemporaries best qualified to fill that important station. The zeal that he brought to bear on the discharge of his official duties is attested by the work of his hands. A commentary on Isaiah, accompanied by an Italian translation, was undertaken for the instruction of his pupils.<sup>3</sup> It is pref-

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to the *מסחרל*, and to the *בית המוצר*.

<sup>2</sup> *בית המוצר* nearly throughout its numbers.

<sup>3</sup> To the infinite regret of all the lovers of literature, only nineteen chapters have hitherto been published, though unprinted copies of the

aced by a dissertation on the theories evolved from the inspired writings, and on the method to be pursued in order to enter fully into the spirit which pervades them. Two eminent German scholars, sensible of the value of that masterly production, requested of its renowned author permission to render it into their vernacular. He refused from no mean motive, but because his eager desire (so he expresses himself) had always been to scatter in Israel books composed in Hebrew—whatever the subject might be—so that all his brethren throughout the countries of their dispersion might reap the benefits of his labor; and the holy tongue might, partially at least, be revived in their midst.

But the students before whom the beauties and truths of our Bible were daily unfolded, would have understood only imperfectly their great teacher, unless conversant with Hebrew grammar. This essential study had for centuries past been wofully neglected; and although Italy can boast of an Archivolti, of a Calimani and a Romanelli, the knowledge they sought to promote gained but comparatively few votaries. To our Luzzatto is due the merit of having again attracted to it the attention of the Jewish public in the Peninsula. With his wonted earnestness he set forth its claims to the meditation of students. Various grammatical disquisitions from his pen had already found space in monthly magazines and weekly periodicals, but he left his pupils nothing more to desire on that branch when his "Grammatica" was placed in their hands.<sup>1</sup> It is throughout replete with keen and useful observations. That part, however, which he devotes

complete work are found in the hands of many of our brethren, both in Italy and Germany. We remember to have seen it in our youth in the city of Leghorn. [The complete book of Isaiah, with Italian translation and Heberew commentary was published in Padua, 1867. [G]]

<sup>1</sup> The copy we possess is defective. It extends only as far as page 324, but we presume that the work itself has reached its completion. [His "Grammatica della Lingua Ebraica," was published at Padua in 1853. His "Prolegomeni ad una Grammatica Ragionata della Lingua Ebraica," Padua, 1836, was translated into English by our



to the rules of accentuation, cannot fail especially to interest those who aim at a perfect reading of the language in which our bards and seers uttered their undying messages.

But the object which seems to have almost engrossed the thoughts of Professor Luzzatto, was to afford his scholars a comprehensive view of Judaism. He would that their religious convictions might, like his own, be so deeply rooted as to stand proof against the stormy wind of the prevailing neologism and scepticism *וּפִילּוֹ כָּל הַרְחֹתוֹ שְׁבַע עוֹלָם (כּוֹחַ הַטּוֹמָאָה) בָּאוֹת וְנוֹשְׁבוֹת בּוֹ אֵין מוֹצִין אוֹתוֹ מִמְּקוֹמוֹ*. To effect this pious design, he composed his "Teologia Morale,"<sup>2</sup> a work divided into two hundred lessons, wherein he lucidly exhibits the high principles enunciated both in Biblical and Talmudical writings. The following paragraph quoted from the preface will reveal the mind of the author: "If in all matters entrusted to my tuition, I have always deemed it a duty to endeavor strenuously that my instruction should suit the degree of culture already attained by the pupils and the important station that they will occupy in society, when I was about preparing a course of moral theology, I felt that the obligation was a still more holy one. My soul was deeply impressed with the imperative necessity of supplying the minds of the future teachers and shepherds of Israel with clear and just ideas of the morality of Judaism, so that they might, in due time, impart in its own purity that religion which, when drawn from its primary sources, to wit, the holy scripture and tradition, is eminently social and promotive of the most healthful state of civilization."<sup>3</sup>

Now it might be reasonably supposed that he, to whose author, and published in the Fifth Biennial Report of the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, 1896. [G]

<sup>1</sup> Aboth III.22. "Even if all the winds in the world come and blow upon it, it cannot be stirred from its place". [G]

<sup>2</sup> "Lezioni di Teologia Morale Israelitica", Padua, 1862. Another volume entitled "Lezioni di Teologia Dogmatica Israelitica" appeared in Trieste, in 1864. [G]

<sup>3</sup> This work of 135 pages, octavo, has been translated from the Italian by ourself, and we trust to be able at some future day to offer it to the public. [Our author's translation of this work was published serially in the Jewish Index, during 1872. [G]]

abilities the preparing of Jewish youths for the ministry was committed, would consider his attending to that task sufficiently onerous; but Samuel David Luzzatto was indefatigable. The vigor of his gigantic mind lent additional strength to his bodily frame. He would not suffer aught to prevent the accomplishing of his self-imposed obligation. To improve his brethren, to disclose the transcendent charm of their literature, he eagerly seized every moment he could spare from his high calling. A testimony thereof we possess in his **אורח גר** (Oheb Ger), a volume which issued from the press the year following his election to the professorship at the Rabbinical College.<sup>1</sup> The deepest research characterises that production. Had he written but that, he would justly have challenged the commendation of the learned; for, in developing the system adopted by *Onkelos*, in his Chaldaic version of the Pentateuch, he casts a flood of light on other topics of literary importance. That which more particularly struck us was a critical discussion of the difference existing between the Israelites of Spanish and of German descent, in their pronunciation of the Hebrew. It had been positively asserted by grammarians of both schools, that an habitual disregard of settled rules had engendered defects in the pronunciation of our brethren of Northern Europe, which could not be eradicated; but the keen intellect of our Luzzatto traced the difference to a purer source. He discovered a strong resemblance between the pronunciation of the Ashkenazim and that of the Syriac tongue, as spoken in the western part of Asia, and arrived at the conclusion that our fathers' long intercourse with the Gentiles inhabiting Palestine had given origin to the difference. The Sephardic pronunciation, on the other hand, in some respects, resembles more closely that of the Syrians who had taken up their abode in Babylon and its vicinity.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It bears an earlier date, but we gather from its contents that it was perfected only after his arrival at Padua. [First appeared in Vienna, 1830. A second revised edition was issued by Isaac Graeber in Cracow, 1895. [G]]

<sup>2</sup> See pages 92, 94, and 95 of the same work.

The celebrity of our author gave his erudite explanation immense weight, and we saw it of late adduced in defence of the manner in which the ritual is rehearsed in German and Polish Synagogues. Nevertheless, we apprehend that the question may be open for discussion.

Knowing that the Syrians of both parts of Asia agree in many points touching the pronunciation of their language, it might be asked: How did it happen that some among our ancestors shaped the Hebrew after it only in a minor degree, and others followed it entirely as a standard? We leave the solution of this query to more competent scholars. We stated it because our perusal of the **אורה נורה** suggested it to our mind. It would, indeed, afford us ineffable satisfaction to see an early and definite settlement of a difficulty which the renowned Luzzatto only began to remove. Alas! that very few in this material age emulate his perseverance and unwearied zeal in the pursuit of learning! Some, whose natural talents would have qualified them as our national teachers, pandering to the crotchets of the worldly, exercise their intellect to the detriment of Jewish interests. Verily, when we contemplate the ever growing apathy with respect to sacred literature, we may well lament the loss of a man who was wholly devoted to its culture; for he omitted no occasion by which he could enhance the value of our precious heirloom. He dived into the ocean of time and drew forth sparkling jewels. How must the immortal bard of Andalusia have rejoiced when his sublime inspiration thrilled again devout hearts! For centuries his poems had been buried in oblivion. At length the hand of one that loved the poet fondly, brought them to the bright light of day. A traveler who was wont to go in quest of rare books, found, in the city of Tunis, many unedited poems of R. Judah Halevi. He reported the circumstance to the illustrious scholar at Padua, and was requested by him to spare neither efforts nor gold to effect a purchase. He met with success, and the literary world was enriched with a volume, in reading which we know not which to admire more, whether the flight of an ardent imagination, or the pathos of a sensitive

soul. The *בתולה בת יהודה* edited and published by S. D. Luzzatto,<sup>1</sup> is a reflection of that deep sentiment of religion which impelled the poet at an advanced age to abandon the country of his birth, his early associations, his pupils, and his friends, that he might bedew with his tears the ruins of the Temple. We see him depart. We follow him through the delightful plains of Cordova and Granada. We hear his pensive strains as a propitious wind wafts him nearer to his longed-for Zion. We stand breathless at his description of a rising tempest, and pour forth thanks with him when he safely reaches Alexandria, visits Damietta, and crosses the Nile to survey the land wherein the outstretched arm of the Lord wrought wonders. Luzzatto arranged with care the forty-four cantos and three letters brought to light in this most attractive work. He elucidated obscure passages by numerous annotations, and wrote a preface fraught with erudite remarks regarding the antiquity of certain Synagogal hymns, and about the difference in their wording. *ברוך הוא ל"י אשר לא עזב חסדו את החיים ואת המתים*. "Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not forsaken his kindness, both towards the living and towards the dead."<sup>2</sup>

We cannot quit the subject in which we are engaged, without referring once more to the greatest poet of Israel since the closing of the sacred Canon. It is the general belief that R. Judah Halevi met with a tragic end. The author of *שלשלת הקבלה* relates that, as he entered the gates of Jerusalem, he rent his garments, and while kneeling on the ground and reciting his famous elegy on Zion, a Mussulman on horseback rode over his body and left him dead. Professor Luzzatto calls this narrative a fabrication. We translate his words: "It is all a palpable falsehood; for in the time of R. Judah Halevi, Saracens were not permitted to remain in Jerusalem, the city then being under the rule of the Crusaders. Even if we admit that one might by chance be there, it is not to be believed that he would

<sup>1</sup> First appeared at Prague in 1840. A second edition was published later at Lyck in 1864. [G]

<sup>2</sup> Ruth ii.20. [G]

dare, in sight of the conquerors of Palestine, to trample a stranger under foot. So, likewise, it is very improbable that the poet would then rehearse an elegy he composed in Spain, and in which this sentence occurs: 'Oh! that I had wings, that I might fly afar off, and lay my broken heart upon thy ruins.' Besides, who does not know, that the poetical vein of the Andalusian Rabbi was an inexhaustible fountain, and an overflowing river? He certainly had no need of repeating a lamentation written in the style of one who lives at a distance, when his genius would have readily inspired him with a new one as he stood on sacred soil. But I am of opinion that his cherished wish was never realized. From Cairo he set off to traverse the desert of Egypt, and while there some mishap befell him."<sup>1</sup>

We trust that this slight digression may be pardoned by reason of the sentiments of profound love and veneration that the name of Judah Halevi evokes. We will now resume.

In the city of Gorizia, a Jewish youth of great talents and sterling virtues,<sup>2</sup> celebrated his marriage in the month of December, 1851. On such occasions epithalamiums are usually presented by friends. The professor at Padua, however, who knew that science was the groom's chief delight, instead of offering a nuptial song, dedicated to him a volume of scientific researches, "A Dialogue on the Kabbala and the Zohar, and on the Antiquity of the Punctuation and Accentuation in the Hebrew Language." None among the numerous productions of Luzzatto created the stir which the appearance of such a work caused among the learned of Israel; for it deals a deadly blow to doctrines and practices which adverse circumstances have blended with Judaism and time has hallowed. Would it not then have been prudent at least to forbear giving it publication? . . . No! truth may be suppressed when by proclaiming it some injury would be entailed either upon individuals or society; but we

<sup>1</sup> בתולת בן יהודה pages 25 and 26. Professor Munk, of Paris, in his "Palestine" agrees that the end of Judah Halevi is unknown, and throws doubts on the authenticity of the story as reported.

<sup>2</sup> Graziado I. Ascoli, see p. 182 [G]



should *never* be deterred from boldly giving utterance to it when falsehood strives to gain supremacy. Kabbalism and Judaism are antagonistic to each other; for the latter leads the mind to the Supreme Source of goodness through the inculcation of social virtues; the former, on the contrary, demands of its votaries a total abstraction from the world, an ascetic life that withdraws man from his fellow-creatures. So long as its theories remained in abeyance, they might have continued unopposed; but when Hasidism, with its blighting effects, gained followers among a portion of our brethren, it became necessary to hold its errors up to view; not by inveighing against the tenets it preaches, but by subjecting them to a critical examination. The cause of religion would then triumph, and bigotry hide its face. Precisely this was done by S. D. Luzzatto. The ponderous weight of his historical, Talmudical, and exegetical knowledge crushed to the earth Kabbalism and Hasidism, its spurious offspring.<sup>1</sup> We have been told that a warm contest arose, and several pamphlets were issued to rebut the arguments of the Italian savant. Rabbi Elias Benamozegh, of Leghorn, a man well known in literary circles, arose to the defense of the Zohar, and with uncommon vigor wielded the weapon; but his *מעם לשר*, very kindly sent to us, did not come to hand, and we only judge by report. We were shown some extracts from a refutation by N. N. Coronel, of Jerusalem, but too meagre to form an opinion. This, however, we do assert, that Luzzatto seldom entered the lists without coming forth victorious.

Not that he gloried in his achievements, but he rejoiced in the consciousness of having labored for a noble end. Yes, to enlighten Israel and sanctify the Lord had been his early vow, and he fulfilled it to the last. He laid upon the altar of his religion man's most precious offering, his life-time and his faculties. Sixty-five years was his portion on earth, fifty he spent in seeking the favor of his God and Maker. His domestic afflictions had been severe, but they

<sup>1</sup> The *אורי נודם* of Leon de Modena has the same tendency, but follows a different course of reasoning, and it is arranged in a different form.

did not dampen his ardor. His means were scanty, but this did not deter him from contributing towards extending the domains of science and theology; and, notwithstanding his superior abilities and almost universal fame, humility and simplicity of heart distinguished our Luzzatto in all his daily walks; so have they declared who enjoyed his personal acquaintance. That happiness has been denied to us. We preserve an answer to a letter we once addressed to him, but we never pressed the hand that wrote it. We owe him a debt of infinite gratitude; for his writings have been to us a guide and a delight. How shall we repay it? We will ever bear his name on our lips with profound reverence, and thus lament his death.

אדה! יום מעיני בשר נחבאת אמוני ארץ מגון הרות

#### LUZZATTO'S POSTHUMOUS WORKS.<sup>1</sup>

In a letter which I have recently received, Dr. Isaiah Luzzatto announces the publication of posthumous works of his learned father. He hints at the idea that through my instrumentality American Israelites, but especially teachers at our schools and preachers in our pulpits, may benefit by the researches of the late professor at Padua. Wishing to carry out that idea, I make free with your columns, kindly open to me, time and again, without stint.

Foremost among the writings alluded to in that communication, is a new translation of the Bible, in Italian. My colleagues, who know how effectively the renowned savant labored in the field of scriptural exegesis, need not be shown the advantage which sacred literature will derive from such a translation. They believe, like myself, that the offspring of a mind far-reaching in its investigations, of an intellect keen, vigorous, and original in its conception, will cast a flood of light on many sentences hitherto obscure;

<sup>1</sup> This appeal is included here to show the great admiration in which our author held S. D. Luzzatto, and the great love which he had for all that Luzzatto wrote. It is a human document worthy of preservation. [G]

that countless words, incomprehensible without a thorough knowledge of kindred languages, will be explained by it in a manner which removes difficulties from the text, and reproduces the thought of the inspired author. But if evidences of the rare merits which that undertaking must possess were requisite, they would be given by an authority that no one dares gainsay. Who more than the Germans of the present age have dived into the science of hermeneutics? But who more ready than they to accord to Luzzatto a seat most exalted among veritable critics! Scarcely a few pages of his comments on Isaiah had issued from the press, when two celebrities asked that they might be privileged to translate it into German. The request was not complied with, but the thought that prompted it suffices to attest the sterling merits of whatever Luzzatto's prolific pen yielded.

For years, persons of culture and religious zeal had solicited at the hands of the eminent philologist the completion of a work which he had in part performed with unrivaled success. "None" wrote Jewish journalists in Italy "can give us a version of the whole Bible, based upon modern research, and free from doctrinal bias, but he whose love of truth is as great as his acquaintance with the Hebrew and cognate tongues is perfect."<sup>1</sup> And this sentiment uttered every day more loudly and more generally, overcame a strong reluctance to the prosecution of the work. Was the hesitancy a presentiment?...

<sup>1</sup> Strange as it may appear, the Jews of Italy, abounding in every generation with men of learning, never undertook to translate the entire Bible in their vernacular. In some Hebrew edition of Holy Writ, there would be found in the margin, the meaning of difficult words, but for more information than that the student was compelled to have recourse to the teacher. In the beginning of the 17th century, John Diodati, a distinguished clergyman, who had embraced Protestantism, translated with elegance of diction the old Scriptures, the New Testament, and the Apocrypha, but all, of course in the interest of the Christian religion. Still even that version could be procured with difficulty, for the Catholic church that permits only the Vulgate to be used, had placed Diodati's work under the ban.

Luzzatto did not live to accomplish the labor so urgently imposed upon him. Yet it may in all fairness be said that his spirit brought it to completion.

Before the grave was closed over the remains of the venerated teacher, men who had imbibed his lessons—ripe scholars filling rabbinical chairs in various cities—vowed to honor the memory of the illustrious departed and benefit his bereaved family. To finish what would have been his crowning work, they resolved to devote their time and best talents gratuitously. And now the result is seen in a book, which must remain as one of the brightest monuments of human learning. The student will consult it, and many of his doubts will vanish; the erudite scholar will read it with the satisfaction which proceeds from discovering that nothing was accepted without scrupulous research, that every sentence had been placed in the crucible of unsparing criticism.

English-speaking Israelites in America have been supplied with a translation of the Bible by a co-religionist<sup>1</sup> who worked for them long and faithfully, but our ministers throughout the country and our rising colleges, ought to enrich their libraries with a copy of the production of a mind, acknowledged as an authority on exegetical science. And I beg to make *The Record* the vehicle through which to convey the announcement that the Luzzato family at Padua, would rejoice to disseminate among their trans-Atlantic brethren the writings of the renowned departed.

Perhaps more acceptable—because more readily understood—than Luzzatto's Italian will be to the Hebraists in this country, the comment he left on the Five Books of Moses, and which is in course of publication. The *Mishtaddel*, added by special request to the second edition of Mendelssohn's Pentateuch—as a mere outline—foreshadows the completed work. True, there is no lack of commentaries to the Law. From the days that the wonderfully erudite Talmudist of France—deservedly called the chief of expositors—began to write, men have tried their abilities

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Leeser [G]

in explaining the Torah from different standpoints. Some would present the literal meaning, others would put on it a figurative sense, and while many employed the text to moralize, not a few used it to indulge in philosophical disquisitions. Reggio has reckoned 148 commentaries, some printed and some inedited, and since he made that enumeration, new ones, besides his own, have been produced. In 1862, Elias Benamozegh issued a comment into which an immense deal that has a bearing on the Mosaic writings, whether among ancient sciences or modern investigations, may be said to have been drawn as into a focus. And were it not that the author's ardent advocacy of Kabbalism gives that product of his pen, like all his compositions, a coloring undisguisedly fictitious, the breadth and depth of learning, and the remarkable fluency of style which that work reveals, would entitle it to a prominent rank.

But without detracting from the merits of any of our Hebrew commentaries, we may be warranted in anticipating from Luzzatto's dispassionate judgment and versatile genius a labor unique in its character. That, together with some poems still in manuscript, but which the oldest son and family of the deceased are engaged in bringing to light, I would recommend to my colleagues. I believe that my success in procuring purchasers to the works herein mentioned, will have promoted the cause of sacred literature, and practically shown the reverence in which I hold a most distinguished son of our race.



# A CRITICAL AND HERMENEUTICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH

By PROFESSOR SAMUEL DAVID LUZZATTO.

Translated from the Italian

[Some time ago I made use of the columns of the *Jewish Record*, with the view of inducing my colleagues to purchase inedited works of the late Professor at Padua. In response to my call, a few among the lovers of Jewish literature in this country agreed to buy his Hebrew comment on the Pentateuch. This, however, has an Italian translation on the opposite side of the text, and it contains, moreover, in the same language, an exegetical essay, intended originally as a preliminary instruction to the critical study of the five books of Moses, pursued at the Padua college. I think it due to those who have bespoken the work aforementioned, and who are not conversant with the Italian, that I should supply them, at least, with an English version of the essay, since it would be impossible, and not quite as necessary, to undertake the rendition into our vernacular tongue of the Italian translation of the text itself.

Will you permit me to let *The Record* be the means of offering this voluntary labor of mine to the subscribers to one of Luzzatto's posthumous writings? I can assure your readers that the subject treated is well deserving of the attention not only of Hebraists, but of all our brethren who feel interested in the history of their Holy Law and religion.

A few prefatory sentences, as well as several expressions, in the course of this writing, addressed by the Professor to his students, have been omitted. Hebrew quotations, have also, so far as practicable, been translated into English, to lessen typographical labor, and enable the largest number of readers to understand the contents.]

In every age, the belief that the Pentateuch could claim altogether as its author and compiler the Arch-Prophet, was universal. The last chapter of Deuteronomy formed an exception, because, as it tells of the death of the writer, the sages of the Talmud themselves raised the question, whether it should be attributed to Moses, or not rather to Joshua. We read in Baba Batra, p. 15: "Can it be possible that Moses, having departed this life, wrote this: 'Moses, the servant

of the Lord, died'? No; the Seer recorded as far as the preceding verse, the rest must have been added by Joshua."

Against a universal and firm belief among Jews and Christians, and we may even include heathens, Father Richard Simon<sup>1</sup> set himself up a century and a half ago.

He asserted, in his critical history of the Old Testament, that, in fact, Moses is the author of only such portions of the Pentateuch as belong to Divine institutions and ordinances, that whatever relates to history has been set forth by persons whom he calls "Scribes," or public writers, known also by the title of prophets; persons who were, in fact, nothing else, according to his hypothesis, than officers charged by the authorities to act in the capacity of historiographers.

That such a position has no ground to stand on, will become very obvious when we look to the simple fact that the preceptive, or legal parts, and the historical passages, are never disjoined in the Pentateuch, nor in the least manner distinct from one another,—a circumstance which could not possibly have happened if various authors had recorded various events. We perceive, on the contrary, that in almost every page of the sacred code, Divine commands flow from narratives, with which they are inseparably connected and naturally interwoven. Thus, for instance, the civil law about inheritance, chronicled in Numbers, Chap. 27, is contained in eleven sentences, five of which are a complaint of the daughters of Zelophehad, properly pertaining to the historical part, while the six which follow constitute the preceptive part. But the law, beginning with the words, "the daughters of Zelophehad speak rightly," refers so very plainly to a piece of history, that our giving credence to

<sup>1</sup> Richard Simon (1683–1721) was a French scholar and orientalist who wrote the first extensive critical introduction to the Bible. His "*Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament*" (1678) aroused the ire of the Church, through whose influence the first edition of 1300 copies was seized and destroyed. Other editions of the book later appeared in Holland. Simon is the author of several other books and pamphlets in which he defends his views. (Jew. Ency., s. v.) [G]

the theory that Moses wrote only the legal portion of the sacred text and not the historical, would be a voluntary surrender of our common sense. So, again, the criminal laws concerning homicide, as registered in Leviticus, xxiv, are thoroughly intermingled with the incident relative to the misdeed of the blasphemer. The passage commences with these words, "Bring forth him that cursed," and then proceeds to define the laws of murder, or the infliction of severe injuries, and so forth.

It would be useless for me to descant further to show that in the divine code ordinances and narratives form an inseparable whole, and that they would have been presented in an entirely different garb, if the legal portion had had an origin distinct from the historical. Still, I will add three more remarks upon this score. The first is, that the book of Joshua furnishes some clear information respecting the contents of "the book of the law of God" as far back as the days very near those in which Moses lived, thus proving that it did not hold merely a set of rules, but also a vast deal belonging to history. When Joshua was about to leave the world, he received from the tribes, as a result of his paternal admonition, the promise that they would remain ever faithful to the worship of the true God.

We see that on the same occasion the worthy pupil and successor of Moses put down the solemn declaration which our ancestors made in the Pentateuch. We read "Joshua wrote these things in the book of the law of God." He certainly would never have thought of subjoining the episode to the end of the Mosaic volumes, if these had held nothing but mere ordinances, and did not embody, as they do now, and as they truly always did embody, a variety of records, touching the most important of our national events.

The second remark is, that the ancients among our people, cherishing the highest sense of veneration for the Arch-prophet, would on no account have tolerated that narratives traced by other hands than his own, be incorporated into the Divine laws which they had received through his agency. If Joshua allowed himself to insert in

the sacred code the above-named admonition and the assurance of fidelity obtained, he did not place them in the body of the inspired volumes, but simply at the end thereof;<sup>1</sup> as was done with the narrative of the death of Moses, conformably to the opinion of some Talmudical sages, who ascribe its authorship to Joshua. Clearly it is one thing, after the conclusion of a book, to speak of the decease of its writer—a circumstance which can never mislead nor create misgivings—and it is another thing to engraft, as it were, on the body of the work itself, whole accounts by way of interlineation or otherwise.

My third remark has reference to the hypothesis that Scribes were clothed by the authorities with the office of historiographers; and I purpose to show that it lacks the slightest support from any part of the holy volume called the Pentateuch. After the defeat of Amalek, God said to Moses, "Write this as a record in the book." (Exodus xvii. 14).<sup>2</sup> The Lord does not ask him to confide the task to any one else. Besides, I ask, would that trusty minister, Joshua—so very jealous of his master's authority, that, at the slightest fear of the impairment of its supremacy, he cried out (against Eldad and Medad), "Moses, my lord, forbid them," (Numbers xi, 28)—would that trusty minister, I say, have suffered any mortal to write not only the history of his master's life and marvellous deeds, but also that of the creation and of the flood, which presupposes the possession

<sup>1</sup> I suppose that Luzzatto means to convey this idea. As the book of Joshua had not yet been compiled, the leader of the tribes, anxious to preserve the memory of the last act of his administration—so instructive to posterity—gave it himself temporarily a place in the Pentateuch as an appendix. (Translator).

<sup>2</sup> Luzzatto seems doubtful about the precise meaning of the unusual expression following immediately the above. . . . "and put it in the ears of Joshua" (lit.). In his Italian translation he renders it "Call to it Joshua's special attention," but in his Hebrew commentary, after having quoted several opinions, he says, "It appears to me that the phrase implies the dictating of the events to Joshua, while the latter acted the honorable part of Secretary, likely in recognition of his military services. (Translator).

of an inspired mind? Would he not have repeated against such historiographers, his exclamation: "Moses, my lord, forbid them?" And further: could these historians transmit many events with a detailed precision, and yet forget to chronicle the public act—needfully performed in a very solemn manner—the act which clothed them with the office of authentic and heaven-gifted scribes of the nation? I have dwelt too long on the refutation of a hypothesis which cannot be sustained in any shape or form.

I will not, however, let pass unnoticed, a matter which the critic brings forth as a strong support to his position. He finds that the sacred text, speaking of Moses, invariably makes use of the third person, and not of the first. He does not know—for knowing it, he should not hide it—that the example of Julius Caesar and Josephus' overthrows his argument. But in connection with this very same mode of reasoning, I shall offer an observation, which will reduce the hypothesis of our critic to a perfect absurdity, because self-contradictory. Now: it is not only in the historical part—fancied to have been written by Scribes—that the sacred text uses the third person, when alluding to the Arch-prophet, but also in the preceptive part, where we constantly meet with the expression, "The Lord spoke unto Moses, as follows." If then this manner of speaking proves nothing in the legal portion of the Scriptures, nothing antagonistic to the common, nay, universal, belief that Moses was the inspired compiler of the Pentateuch, it proves absolutely nothing against it in the historical portion thereof.

Our critic is again at fault when he points to the seeming want of order in some of the narratives of the Pentateuch as carrying out his hypothesis. This argument, like the preceding, belongs to that mode of reasoning that, aiming to prove too much, proves nothing. If want of order in the narratives of the sacred code is a reality, then those nar-

<sup>1</sup> See Julius Caesar's "Commentaries," and Josephus' "Wars of the Jews" in which the writers recount in the third person events where they played the most important part. (Translator).



ratives could not have been chronicled by authorized beings writing under an inspired influence, surely not by wise "Scribes." It follows, that the lack of a proper arrangement pointed at is only apparent, and it is just as willed by the Lord. It follows, again, that the narratives may have been—as they actually were—put down by the heaven-directed hand of the Arch-prophet, and placed by him together with the legal or preceptive parts.

Equally unhappy in his choice of arguments is the author of whom we speak, when he brings forth a few verses, on which some ancient commentators among our people have looked with a suspicious eye, as interpolations (which verses will engage our attention hereafter) for the very reason that he who contends that several lines, in any book whatever, have been interpolated, gives inferentially his support to the authenticity of the bulk of the work. Nor can it be asserted that in a volume, assumed to have issued from various and uncertain writers—as our critic, with little judgment, claims the sacred code to have come into existence—scattered sentences have been surreptitiously introduced.<sup>1</sup>

But more clashing with accepted notions than even the hypothesis controverted in preceding paragraphs, is an exceedingly heterodox opinion, advanced by some of the most learned Orientalists among the Protestant theologians of Germany. It is needful to guard against the impression which the perusal of works flowing, confessedly from deep scholarship and, apparently, far-reaching reflection, may create. I deem it a duty to lend others the arms which my mental efforts have supplied me with, to defend the good cause.

Well, several of the modern linguists allege that history does not present a single instance in which a language

<sup>1</sup> Luzzatto means, I conceive, that interpolations can only be said to exist, in a writing, the author of which is generally acknowledged but not in a mere compilation, where a number of unknown hands have been at work. (Translator).

could continue during the space of fully a thousand years, so uniformly alike, as we see the Hebrew language to have remained from the first to the last writer of the sacred Canon; from Moses to Nehemiah, two personages living at the distance of a thousand years. From the pretended impossibility of a uniformity of such duration in the language, they have dared to infer that the Pentateuch could not have been written until ages after the time of Moses, that is, in the days of David, or even later. The reasoning is specious and seductive, for such an instance is really extraordinary. The languages known do not, in fact, offer a similar example. But when we go back and look for the causes, we will find that the alterations which ages work in a language are not made principally by the running stream of time, but by outside influences that foreign nations, whether inimical or friendly, bring to bear on it.

An inimical race will alter the language of the nation conquered, as Northern peoples altered the Latin tongue and gave rise to modern European languages; while friendly nations will occasion changes in their respective languages, by the mutual exchange of learning, customs, habits; and, as a result thereof, also of their mode of speaking, and even of single words.<sup>1</sup> It is thus that in our own days the Italian, the French, the English and the German, continually interchange terms and phrases, each lending, and again, in turn receiving, by reason of the very state of amicable intercourse that exists.

Now, little as one may have considered the political condition of our people, when settled in Palestine, he cannot

<sup>1</sup> The implication is, that the Hebrew in the time of Moses must have differed materially from the Hebrew in the days of the Monarchy, as, by way of illustration, the English of Chaucer differs from that of Tennyson. But as a diversity so strikingly remarkable, cannot be traced between the diction of the Arch-prophet and that of the royal Psalmist, the Pentateuch must have emanated from some clever pen in the palmy days of the language. So would modern critics make us believe. The reader may also find sensibly written remarks on this topic, in Munk's "Palestine," (Translator).

have failed to perceive that during the whole of that period we had no intercourse, or almost none, with those whose vernacular tongue was not the Hebrew. Inimical invasions and conquests made, had relation only to the various populations of Canaan and its vicinity; populations that spoke the same Hebrew language, called by Isaiah himself "the language of Canaan" (Isaiah xix, 18). No other language but the Hebrew was used by the Phoenicians, that is, the people of Tyre and Sidon, whose every record unearthed may be readily interpreted by means of a knowledge of Hebrew. Social and commercial transactions were rare with neighboring peoples, and extremely rare with distant ones. Hence the influence of strange nations could not produce any modification or alteration in the Hebrew tongue. But we, indeed, perceive that no sooner had a people from a rather far off country, speaking a different language intervened; no sooner, I say, had the Babylonian invasion of Judea taken place, than the Hebrew began to lose its purity, and to adopt a quantity of Chaldaisms, from which it never freed itself. Until that happened, the people of God, keeping purposely aloof, because of its theocratic constitution, from idolatrous nations and not having suffered from the inroads of a horde of tribes that hailed from remote lands, and spoke diverse tongues—could, without our being surprised at the circumstance, retain its own language intact. Let then the truth prevail, and let this be acknowledged as a firmly settled fact; the sacred volumes of the Pentateuch belong altogether—as the ancients always believed—to the Arch-prophet Moses.

There remains now for us to speak of the genuineness of the same holy book in its entirety. This part of our introduction will be the longest, but that which affords the greatest instruction, while it is the most delightful. The absurd charge brought against our people in the early days of Christianity by some of its followers, as for instance by Justin the Martyr, and by Irenaeus, and afterwards, in later times, by men of our own faith, who lapsed into that

new belief, as Nicholas de Lyra<sup>1</sup> and Paul Burgenses,<sup>2</sup>—the preposterous charge that Holy Writ has been maliciously mutilated and disfigured by us from hatred against the new religion—is taken by all critics for what it is worth; namely, for an accusation destitute of a shadow of reason; nay, absolutely repugnant and antagonistic to sound reason. It would, therefore, be useless to rebut it. But a glaring falsehood, insisted upon by Father John Morino<sup>3</sup> in his Bible Exercises, must be alluded to.

In chapter 6 of the first Exercise, he tries, with a richness of misdirected Rabbinical erudition, to give currency to the belief that the authority of the ancient Sanhedrin and of the Babylonian Academies was so great among our co-religionists, that if the Sages wished it, they could, without the least obstacle, have foisted any alteration into the sacred text, and have led the bulk of the nation submissively and blindly to adopt it.

To become convinced of the groundlessness of that

<sup>1</sup> Nicholas de Lyra, a famous French exegete (1270–1340), is supposed to have been of Jewish descent. In his exegetical works, he followed Rashi faithfully and adhered closely to the literal sense of the text. (ib. s. v.) [G]

<sup>2</sup> Paul de Burgos or Paul de Santa Maria (1351–1435), whose Jewish name was Solomon ha-Levi, was a very wealthy and learned Jew, who became converted to Christianity and subsequently became Archbishop in Spain. Although he kept in touch with Rabbinic learning even after he became baptised, and was in correspondence with a number of Jewish scholars, he was a bitter enemy of Judaism and wrote several works against the Jews. His “Additiones”, consisting of additions to Nicholas de Lyra’s comments on the Bible, have frequently been reprinted (ib. s. v.) [G]

<sup>3</sup> Jean Morin or Joannes Morinus (1591–1695), was a convert from Protestantism to Catholicism and devoted himself mainly to Biblical studies, which are often colored by his Catholic prejudices. He edited the Samaritan Pentateuch and Targum and regarded these as more correct than the original Hebrew. The exaggerated depreciation of the Hebrew text is also evident in his greatest work, published posthumously, “*Exercitationes Biblicae*” (1660), in which he brings his great learning and tremendous industry in support of his theory against the integrity of the Hebrew text and the antiquity of the vowel points. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s. v. Morin). [G]



assertion it will be enough to refer to the Mishnah treatise *Horayot*. In that volume will be seen the exact limits within which the very same sages of the Mishnah and Talmud bound the authority of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin. They made this a rule. If the strange incident should arise that a Sanhedrin commanded the entire abrogation of any precept whatsoever of the Divine Law, that Sanhedrin would not be bound to bring the sin-offering required in the case of the whole nation knowingly committing an error.<sup>1</sup> Each individual, who had sinned by following the decision of the highest tribunal, would then be obliged to bring a sacrifice as an atonement for his offence, because each individual did offend, when he set aside the heavenly authority for the human. The Sanhedrin could be obliged to bring a sin-offering only if they fell into a mistake about a subject disputed by the Sadducees;<sup>2</sup> but if it concerned a

<sup>1</sup> In Leviticus (IV.13) we read, "if the whole assembly of Israel sin, through ignorance, so that a thing remains unknown to the congregation, and they do one of the things prohibited by the Lord, which ought not to be done, and commit a trespass... then shall the assembly offer a young bullock for a sin-offering" etc. Tradition tells that the case here contemplated is that in which the people have transgressed through an error of their representatives, viz., the assembly—or Sanhedrin—a tradition which sound reason supports; for, how could a whole community have acted in a certain case, contrary to the laws, unless led astray by a legal misconstruction of the rules. (Translator).

<sup>2</sup> For the information of general readers, I will say, that the Sadducees were a Jewish sect, that arose about three centuries before the vulgar era, but became extinct long ago as a body. A tradition tells this: The teachings of Antigonus, president of the Sanhedrin, and successor of the renowned Simeon the Just, did not please some Israelites who made material enjoyment the aim and scope of life. That sage recommended adherence to religion for principle's sake and not with the object of being rewarded. (Abot I. 3; Abot d'R. Nathan V). Two of his hearers, Zadok and Boethus, noted in those days for their fondness of luxury and worldly gratifications, understood by that teaching that virtue practiced here needs not expect a recompense hereafter; so that they undertook to preach a doctrine subversive of the belief in immortality, and totally worldly in its tendencies. Its followers assumed the name of Sadducees, from 'Zadok' the principal founder of the sect. This sect grew to be powerful, at intervals, during the existence of the



law so clearly expressed in the sacred code that those schismatics themselves had accepted it, the authority of the Supreme Court would be worthless and its responsibility *nil*. Why? Because everybody is able to ascertain what is right, by reading the plain text. The Talmudists add: the querist sinned, when, without any occasion, he asked for men's decision, concerning what God's word had already decided.

Now, if the sentence of so authoritative a body as the Sanhedrin had not the slightest validity, when clashing with the plain text of the sacred code, it must be false and absurd to contend that the same Sanhedrin could, at pleasure, alter the wording of Holy Writ. We have dwelt sufficiently long upon this subject.

An opinion held by some modern theologians, among our fellow-believers, claims our attention more than that just rebutted. Attaching to the title "Sopher", which Ezra bore, an unwarranted meaning, it has been assumed that he who was distinguished by that epithet, became the restorer, the reviser, the reformer of Holy Writ. This opinion is, not less than the preceding, untenable and senseless; inasmuch as it would accord to a single man an extent of power, which the highest tribunal in the nation never possessed.

second Temple. When, by a turn of the political wheel, one of these schismatics happened to be invested with sacerdotal functions, he would not act according to the traditional imparting, but in open antagonism to it. Thus, for instance, on the Day of Atonement he would enter into the Holy of Holies, with a censer already smoking, while the adherents of tradition would fill the censer with live coals from the inner altar, and then place therein the aromatic spices before passing the sacred veil.—(Translator). [The origin and principles of the Sadducees have been the subject of investigation and study on the part of many modern Jewish and Christian scholars. Geiger, Graetz, Welhausen, Schurer, and many others have written extensively on the subject and Schechter's publication of documents supposed to contain some of the laws of this ancient sect ("Documents of Jewish Sectaries," 2 vols, Cambridge, 1910) again precipitated a controversy on this most interesting and obscure chapter of Jewish history. [G]]

Now, respecting the term "Sopher"—which forms the groundwork of that opinion—it would seem, originally, to be the participial noun of the verb "Saphar," to reckon, and to signify a computist, an accountant, an auditor. For instance, we read in ii Kings xii, 11.: "When they saw that there was enough money in the chest, then the royal *Sopher* and the high priest came and put it in bags and counted the money found in the house of the Lord." And again in xxv, 19: "He (Nebuzaradan) took the *Sopher*, chief of the army, who mustered the people of the land"; two cases where the term evidently carries out the sense we gave it. The noun "Sepher" book, or writing, would appear to have also drawn its origin from the idea of keeping an account or a register for business purposes; as one of the main objects in the art of writing must have been, of course, to record transactions. Even in our own day, we say "book-keeping," in the sense of making a register of money matters. And in like manner as the primitive meaning of the word "Sepher" was extended to denote any kind of writing, and any literary and scientific work, so the participial noun "Sopher" came to express a student, a man whose mind is occupied with books. Thus in i Chronicles, xxvii 32, "Jonathan, an uncle of David, was a counsellor, and a man of understanding and a *Sopher*," namely, a person well read. It is in this sense that Ezra is styled "Sopher," and not in the signification applied to a Scribe. It is to advance the idea that he was a man of letters, well versed in the national literature. And under the same appellation are recognized our oldest sages, those to whom we ascribe the most useful and venerated institutions,—viz.: "Sopherim." Hence, the common expression, "ordinances of the Law, and ordinances of the Sopherim." The Greeks gave the title of "Grammarian" to any individual of culture, to one highly educated; we, in a figurative expression, call him a literato.

But together with the participial noun "Sopher" by which Ezra was distinguished, we meet the adjective "Mahir." "This Ezra went up from Babylon (to Palestine)

and he was *Sopher Mahir* in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given" (Ezra vii.6). The etymology of the word would present to the mind the idea of quickness and promptness; but in reality, it means one who is a talented, expert,<sup>1</sup> as the following sentence in Proverbs xxii. 29, clearly proves: "Hast thou seen a man *Mahir* in his work? He can stand before kings." Here, the adjective "*Mahir*" cannot, certainly, express haste and dispatch but knowledge and skill. Likewise Isaiah (xvi, 5) writes, "A throne shall be established in mercy, and thereon shall sit a judge seeking justice, and *Mahir* of righteousness." To administer the laws uprightly, the quality essentially to be possessed, is not quickness, but ripe experience and proved ability

In fact, when we closely examine the facts connected with the life of Ezra, as told by himself and his coadjutor Nehemiah, we discover that he was thoroughly conversant with the divine code, and that in order to make his co-religionists understand it, and keep its tenets steadfastly, his mind was intently at work. But we are not shown anywhere that he exercised the functions of "Scribe" or copyist.

True: Several of our commentators and celebrated critics, such as Kimchi and the Ephodi, held this as their view. They conceived that, owing to the Babylonian emigration, the holy books had suffered some detriments which Ezra, in conjunction with his venerable colleagues, repaired; that they collated various codices, and set in the margin of the respective volumes various *lections* found, but without daring to alter, in the least, the text itself. Such an hypothesis—not at all savoring of heterodoxy—has been, nevertheless, reasonably combatted by the very learned Abarbanel in his preface to Jeremiah. And what he brought forth to overthrow it, has been strongly supplemented by Elias the Levite in a famous preliminary discourse, the third he prefixed to his "*Massoret ha-Massoret*."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Possibly, having become so through quick perception.—(Translator.)

<sup>2</sup> It may not be familiarly known that Elias, the Levite,—who goes

With cogency he demonstrates that if marginal lections (called *Keri* and *Ketib*)<sup>1</sup> had been introduced by Ezra and his colleagues, in cases wherein they entertained a doubt as to the correct reading, such could not take place in the books which he himself and his co-laborers wrote; for example, in *Nehemiah*, *Esther*, *Chronicles*, etc.<sup>2</sup> It would be absurd to imagine that the authors of such volumes felt doubtful and uncertain about some of the readings in the productions of their own pens.

more generally by the name of "Elijah Bahur," from a writing of his pen which he called "Bahur"—published in Italy towards the beginning of the 16th century, a work on the *Massora*, or the correct reading of the Hebrew text of the Scriptures, enriched with grammatical rules, and revealing a vast amount of painstaking and great erudition. To his work may fittingly be applied the Latin saying "*multum in parvo*," so varied and useful is the information it imparts. Born in Germany, Rabbi Elijah travelled far to increase his store of learning. His endeavors proved successful to such a degree, that, being at Rome, Cardinal Egidio engaged him as his private teacher and liberally supplied all his wants. In connection with this circumstance, it may be worth mentioning that the Jewish contemporaries of Rabbi Elijah seem to have looked with disfavor upon his having undertaken to train a Christian in Hebrew literature; for, by way of apology, he expresses himself as follows: "I fully acknowledge, as if I were before a rightly constituted tribunal, that I have been the instructor of non-Israelites. Still, I belong to the God of the Hebrews, and Him I fear, even the Maker of heaven and earth. Far be it from me to go astray. I consider myself free from blame, because our Rabbis prohibited teaching only the heathen of their times; men who denied the existence of the everlasting Creator. But the Gentiles of our days must not be confounded with the pagans alluded to in the Talmud." Then, in passing, he intimates that if the idea had ever arisen, that on account of the position he held he defiled himself with forbidden food, it should be altogether dismissed. (Translator).

<sup>1</sup> Two technical Aramaic terms, purposing to signify that the reading of the word is not exactly as it is spelt. Rabbi Elijah counted the occasions on which they are met throughout Holy Writ, and he asserts them to be altogether 848, divided as follows: 65 in the Pentateuch, 454 in the Prophets and 329 in the Hagiographa. Much has been written regarding the "*Keri* and *Ketib*," but the authorship and object thereof remain yet a moot question.—(Translator).

<sup>2</sup> The Talmud in treatise *Baba Batra*, attributes to the men of the Great Synod, the collating of those sacred volumes.—(Translator).

But a still more weighty consideration strikes my mind, such as leads me to deny altogether the alleged detriments suffered by Holy Writ on account of the Babylonian emigration. I find in sacred books written subsequently to the time when the just-spoken of injury is said to have been received by the text,<sup>1</sup> mention made of a number of volumes, which, in after ages became entirely lost. I find, for instance, the prophecies of Nathan, of Ahijah, of She-maiah, of Iddo, of Jehu, son of Hanani, and the private chronicles of the kings of Judah and Israel.

Now, if the Babylonian invasion did not bring about the loss of so many volumes of minor importance, which, however disappeared from among us afterwards, through their comparatively small value, how can it be sustained that that invasion, however sweeping, succeeded in destroying or impairing the copies of the law of God; copies which, by reason of their character, must have grown to an extensive number, and must have been jealously kept by whomsoever was the possessor thereof?

Guided by all these facts, we need not fear to establish as a firm principle that the holy books suffered nothing through the dissolution of the Monarchy in the days of our forefathers; that Ezra did not alter, nor did he in any way modify, the sacred code; that he was not a Scribe—as the term is understood now—and that the Hebrew text which we have must not at all be called, as some critics would unwarrantably style it, Ezraic, but only Mosaic and Divine.

I think it useless here to refer to the 18 words<sup>2</sup>, termed

<sup>1</sup> In Chronicles, ascribed by the Talmud to Ezra and his Synod.—(Translator).

<sup>2</sup> It would be impossible to tell the reader briefly what all those eighteen words are, and of what the alterations consist. I will merely cite two, and they will explain the rest. It has been supposed by some of the Rabbis that the original text did not read, for instance, in Genesis xviii.22; "Abraham was yet standing before the Lord," but the Lord was yet standing before Abraham, viz., communing with the patriarch, and that the words were transposed out of respect to the Deity. So, likewise, that Moses did not exclaim, "If Thou deal thus with me, kill me at once, I



by Midrash Tanhuma, and by the Masorah, "an emendation of the Scribes," because an emendation to which they who made it call our attention—even if it took place—could not impair, in the least, the integrity of the text.

I have said, "even if it took place," because Albo holds as his final conclusion that such an emendation cannot mean an actual correction, but a reference made to the softening of the diction, by the sacred historians, so that the sentence in various places does not appear as harsh as the intended expression of the author might have sounded.

Ibn Ezra, however, has shown in different parts of his commentaries that, judging from analogy, the context will not admit of the reading of those 18 words in any other manner, than as they stand in the present text.

It would not be right that I should let a famous objection, raised against the genuineness of the Hebrew text pass unnoticed. Many critics, following in the wake of Father Morino, have thought, and still think, the objection presented by certain discrepancies between our Pentateuch and the Samaritan Pentateuch, insuperable. Two centuries ago a written copy of the five books of Moses, preserved by a small residue of the Samaritan people<sup>x</sup> in their peculiar

pray Thee, if I have found favor in Thy presence, and let me not see *my* wretchedness," Numbers xi, 15: but *their* wretchedness, and the Scribes not wishing to record an evil omen against Israel made the change in the pronoun. Of these emendations 3 have been pointed out in the Pentateuch, 10 in the Prophets, and 5 in the Hagiographa. The learned Yedidyah Solomon of Norzi, in his very useful work 'Minhat Shai,' quotes a number of writers and he inclines to believe that the Sopherim, so called from Saphar, "to count," who counted every sentence and every word in Holy Writ, to guard against interpolations, made a 'Tikkun' in their minds, that is, it became their settled conviction, that the text ought to have been written otherwise than it has been handed down. (Translator).

<sup>x</sup> Every one is acquainted with the origin of the sect of Samaritans, or Cutheans, as the Rabbis have been wont to call them, from Cuthah, one of the principal cities, whence those ancient heathens were sent by victorious Assyria to populate Samaria, after the breaking up of the kingdom of Israel by the army of Shalmanesser. Every reader of

characters, was brought to Europe. Having been printed, it was discovered to be at variance, in many places, with the common reading of our original.

Then a fondness for novelty, which will always thrust aside the old to make room for the new, and the ordinary for the extraordinary, caused many critics to look on that as the veritable text of the Mosaic code. It was surmised that in the same manner as our fathers changed the ancient alphabetical characters—held to be those which are still in use among the Samaritans—into the Assyrian or Chaldaic, so did they also, in many instances, tamper with both words and sentences of the sacred volume. It took fully two centuries before the attractiveness of the novelty wore off, and old truth received a hearing anew.

Gesenius,<sup>1</sup> prince of Orientalists, notwithstanding his being infected with modern errors on points of greater moment than this, may claim the honor of having exhibited to a light as bright as noonday, the very source whence

the Bible knows likewise what hostility that mongrel sect evinced against the exiles of Babylon when striving to re-establish their religion and polity in Palestine, consequent upon the edict of Cyrus. But some may not have heard that "the Men of the Great Synagogue," or synod—begun with Ezra, and closed about 100 years later at the demise of Simeon the Just—thought fit to raise a barrier between the avowed believers in the Unity and those who shuffled and shifted their religious position according to circumstances, by choosing different characters from theirs for transcribing Holy Writ. Samaritan manuscripts of the Pentateuch (for they possess no other books of the Bible, save a legendary work which they dignify with the title of "The Book of Joshua") remained hidden from the eyes of critics; though the Talmud alludes to wilful corruptions grafted on the text. Towards the middle of the 17th century they were first open for inspection, and were read with avidity by learned men traveling in ancient Shechem, now Nablus, where a very few families of the aforementioned sect still reside.—(Translator).

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Heinrich Wilhelm Gesenius (1786–1842), a German orientalist and biblical critic, was professor of Hebrew at the University of Halle for more than thirty years. His text books on Hebrew grammar and lexicography have become standards of excellence throughout the world and have gone through numerous editions in various tongues. He also wrote commentaries on several books of the Bible as well as works on Semitic and general philology. [G]

proceeded the variations in the Samaritan text. He has demonstrated that they are all the issue of an unwarrantable and often senseless criticism, aiming to improve the original by rendering it more intelligible, more consistent, more analogical to rules, and finally more conformable to the language and belief of those schismatics. He divides those variations in eight classes, which I must quote with a few, out of the many, illustrations which our author gives.<sup>1</sup> Scholarship—a goodly accompaniment—and, what is more, the importance of being in readiness to defend religion, demand that sound ideas touching those discrepancies be formed.

The first class comprises a great many pretended emendations, tending to the removal of grammatical anomalies. Thus, when our text has used the rather uncommon personal pronoun *Nahnu*, “we,” the Samaritan reads the usual one *Anahnu*. Where we employ the word *Hael*, “these,” the Samaritan has the regular word *Haeleh*. Where we find written *Tomim*, “twins,” the other has *Teomim*; and by similar would-be grammatical corrections the hand that alters betrays itself, and enhances, by contrast, the venerable genuineness of our hallowed books. The second comprehends several kinds of comments, interpretations, and remarks of the Samaritan critics introduced with the view of lending additional light. Thus, for *ha-ger ha-gar* “the stranger sojourning,” it has *ha-ger asher yagur* “the stranger that might sojourn;” for *zaken vesabea’*, “old and satisfied” (viz., happy), it has *zaken usba’ yamim*, that is, “full of years.” For “these are the children of Seir,” it has, “the children of Esau;” and many other changes of a similar character.

<sup>1</sup> I have taken the liberty of reducing them to a still fewer number, for the reason mentioned in my note prefixed to the translation. I desire to ease typographical labor, and as this part of Luzzatto’s introduction specially teems with quotations in Hebrew, the nature of which is such that the same quotations could not be reproduced intelligibly in English characters, I am unwillingly compelled to curtail.—(Translator).

The third class contains some slight changes or additions, designed to explain away seeming or imaginary difficulties and obscure passages. Thus in Genesis xlvii, 21: "As for the people, he removed them to the cities;" the Samaritan text reads, "he removed them *as servants*."<sup>1</sup> The expression of Jacob to his children in urging them to go to Egypt and buy corn, "Why do you look at one another?" has been changed into "Why do you look in dismay?" In the case of Balak sending for Balaam, his countryman, the phrase *Eretz bene Ammo*, was, with a huge geographical blunder, altered into *bene Ammon*; and several other inexact or, at all events, pretended emendations, quite superfluous, will be met under this head.

To the fourth class belong some changes or slight suggestions predicated on parallel cases, purposing to render the sacred text more uniform and complete. So, for example whenever Moses' father-in-law is called by any other name than the usual one, Jethro, the Samaritan critics made an alteration; so likewise with regard to Joshua, never allowing him to have been called Hoshea. And this anxiety for a conformity in the holy volumes, led the same critics to reduce the full number of the years of the lives of the post-deluvians. In like manner they did not fail to scrupulously mention all the seven Canaanitish peoples, whenever our copy counts only some of them.

The fifth class abounds with interpolations of greater moment, based always upon parallel passages. Where the Pentateuch alludes to something said or done before by Moses or others, but which is not clearly expressed in previous sentences, the Samaritan text inserts in the earlier context the precise words of the later reference. Thus, by way of illustra-

<sup>1</sup> If I may venture an opinion on this subject, I would say, that the Samaritan scribe mistook a *Resh* for a *Dalet*, which letters are also in the ancient Hebrew characters somewhat similar in form, and having read "He'ebid" for "He'ebir", took it for granted that the sentence must have run so. "Ve'et ha'am he'ebid oto la'abadim," viz.: He subjected the people as slaves, a phrase contrary to the genius of the Hebrew language.—(Translator).



tion: In the sixth Chapter of Exodus, we read that the people "did not listen to Moses through anguish of spirit and hard bondage." But as the Israelites, appalled at the sight of their former masters, pursuing them near the Red Sea cried unto Moses, "Is this not the thing which we spoke to thee in Egypt, saying, 'let us alone and we will serve the Egyptians, for it is better that we should serve the Egyptians, than we should die in the wilderness?'" the Samaritans added this very complaint to the verse first cited. Again; after the Hebrews had sinned in worshipping the molten calf, Moses entreated the Lord for their sake. Nothing is then related as to any special supplication made on that occasion for Aaron. But because in Deuteronomy ix.20, Moses referring to that event, said: "The Lord was very wroth with Aaron and would destroy him, but I prayed also for Aaron at that time;" therefore to this passage in Exodus xxxii.10 "Now let me be, so that my anger may kindle against them, and I make an end of them" the Samaritans add the following: "The Lord was very wroth with Aaron to destroy him, but Moses prayed for Aaron." And in this way the text is burdened with a load of such interpolations, partly needless and partly out of all reason.

Our author consigns to the sixth class those places in the hallowed code where the meaning of the words is plain and clear, but the Samaritan critic, fancying to see something inconsistent, did not hesitate to alter and modify at pleasure.

Thus, with regard to the years attained by the patriarchs, both those before, and those after the flood, the number was so changed that longevity might gradually decrease, and never should the son live longer than the father. Hence the years of Yered were reduced from 962 to 847, those of Methuselah from 969 to 720, those of Lemech from 777 to 653, and lastly those of Eber from 464 to 404. Then the same Samaritan critic dreamt that none of the ante-deluvians could have begotten children any later than at the 150th year of his life; and none of the post-deluvians before



his 50th year. Hence, he makes Yered a father at the age of 62 instead of 162; Methuselah at that of 67 instead of 187; Lemech at 53 instead of 182; Arpachshad, on the contrary, at 135 instead of 25; Shelach at 130 instead of 30; and so he does as he lists with all others.<sup>1</sup>

In this class is reckoned also the famous interpolation, which makes the sentence in Exodus xii, 40, read: "The residence of the children of Israel (and of their fathers who dwelt in the land of Canaan and) in the land of Egypt, was 430 years." And the other, "God finished on the sixth day His works which He had done," instead of "the seventh." And that in Genesis xxxi, 3, "And all the *shepherds* gathered there, and they rolled the stone from the mouth of the well," in lieu of "all the *flocks*,"—the Samaritan editor fearing, perhaps, that some might suppose the lambs and goats were accustomed to remove the stone.

The seventh class of alterations in the Samaritan manuscript, as pointed out by Gesenius, is made up of changes that do violence to the genius of the Hebrew lan-

<sup>1</sup> It may not be inopportune to remark on this point, that modern critics have exceeded the Samaritans in ingenuity. For some of them have tried to make us believe that a year of that period was equivalent to a month of our reckoning. Accordingly, Adam was 130 months old, not quite 11 years, when his son Cain was born. And Enoch a little more than 6 when Methuselah came to the world. How ludicrous! But it never occurred to these sapient critics that "Shanah" has always been employed to signify that cycle of months, which, apparently, the sun takes to revolve in its ecliptic, as the etymology of the word denotes—"Shanah," "to repeat," while "Hodesh," "month," signifies a renewal or the changes presented by the phases of the moon. At any rate, the account of the flood sweeps away the flimsy arguments raised to explain away the plain text. For it is recorded that Noah was 600 years old when he entered the ark, and 601 when he left it. Then we read that the waters kept very high on the earth 150 days, that is 5 months all but a few days, and from that hour they began visibly to fail, till in the tenth month the tops of the mountains could be seen. There is no ingenuity which can possibly construe that incident otherwise than its obvious meaning. I believe that the shock which the habitable globe received by the deluge, affected materially man's physical constitution, so that we hear Abraham at the age of one hundred called "an old man." (Translator).

guage, and betray a close analogy to the Samaritan dialect. Thus will the reader meet there a quantity of words constructed in the Aramaic fashion. For instance: *Lich* "to thee," instead of *Lach*. *Yehidach* "thy only one," in the place of *Yehidecha*.

Under this head may be comprised some monstrous changes, introduced at random, in connection with the guttural letters, for the simple reason that the Samaritan tongue makes no distinction between the sound of one and that of the other, as Benjamin of Tudela<sup>1</sup> had occasion to observe. He says, in the account of his travels, that the sect just named lacks the *He*, *Het*, and *'Ayin*, which must be understood to refer to their pronunciation, for the letters themselves can be seen in the manuscripts.<sup>2</sup> Thus by setting an *Ayin* where a *Het* ought to have been, and vice-versa, they destroy the sense of many Biblical sentences, and not infrequently in a manner provoking laughter. For example: when Moses writes "from the blood of the grapes didst thou drink unmixed wine" (Genesis XLIX.11), the Samaritan text has "diddst thou drink wool." Blunders of a similar nature abound in this class.

The eighth and last class, presents modifications and alterations, designed to render the text subservient to the theology, the oral interpretation, and peculiar worship of that people, and to prevent an ignorant multitude from being shocked by certain expressions in the original. On this score, it must first be observed that in four places an entire sentence has been grammatically re-arranged, because the appellation *Elohim* (God) stood in the text in a way that might have raised a suspicion of plurality of deities. For example the utterance of Jacob

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin of Tudela travelled, during the 12th century, from Spain to the far East. The veracity of his narratives has been often impugned by critics; but in Asher's English edition, (London 1840) the translator, I believe, vindicates the Spanish Jew from all aspersions and proves him thoroughly reliable.—(Translator).

<sup>2</sup> They do not have, however, in their alphabet the five special forms of final letters.—(Translator).

(Genesis XLVIII.16) "The angel, who redeemed me from every evil, may bless the lads" has been made to read "the *King* who redeemed me."<sup>1</sup> An excessive zeal,—ill-conceived—gave rise to a fear that the dogma of the Unity might suffer detriment through scriptural passages of this character. A like zeal, equally misdirected, induced the Samaritan to become the avenger of the word of God, as he thought, by changing several phrases savoring of anthropomorphism, or rather anthropopathism. In the song of Moses (Exodus xv.3), "the Lord is a warrior" (lit., a man of battle), the Samaritan reads "the Lord is *mighty* in battle." So, in lieu of "the anger of the Lord smoked," (Deuteronomy XXIX.19) "the anger of the Lord *kindled*."

Led by the same zeal, the Scribe deemed it due to the fathers of our nation that he should not write what Jacob spoke on his death-bed about Simeon and Levi, but rather soften it with a less harsh term. Hence he substituted *Addir* for "Arur," and wrote in Gen. XLIX 7: "*Fearful* is their wrath," and not "Cursed be their wrath."

On the other hand, hatred against the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin guided the pen to transform the benediction of Moses upon Benjamin, so that rather than he should be styled "the beloved of the Lord," the endearing word should be rendered meaningless—as the expression "The *hand*, the *hand* of the Lord shall dwell safely on him" certainly is (changing *Yedid* into *Yad*, *Yad*—*hand*, *hand*). A false respect for the Holy Law wrought also changes in various words that sounded vulgar in the critic's ears; while the peculiar worship of the Samaritans placed the mountain Gerizim where the Arch-prophet had put Ebal. Thus would that sect cast a degree of holiness upon the mountain whereon its temple had been erected. Hence proceeded also the famous interpolation inserted at the end of the Decalogue, to wit: "It shall be that, when the Lord thy God shall bring thee unto the land of the Canaanite, whither thou go-

<sup>1</sup> Seeing this, I surmised that the Samaritans discarded the belief in angels, but from subsequent reading I discovered that I had formed a wrong impression.—(Translator).

est to inherit it, thou shalt raise up great stones, and plaster them over with plaster, then shalt thou write upon the stones all the words of this Law.<sup>1</sup> And when you shall have passed over the Jordan, you shall raise these stones about which I command you *in Mount Gerizim*, and then shalt thou build an altar to the Lord thy God and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God. *That mount is on the other side of the Jordan far in the way of the West, in the land of the Canaanite, who dwells in the plains over against Gilgal, by the grove of Moreh, opposite Shechem.*"

This analysis,—perhaps too long and wearisome,—of the various readings of the Samaritan text, as instituted by one of the greatest among modern Orientalists, suffices, I think, to draw from every sensible critic the acknowledgment that it is spurious in its many features, corrupted and tampered with. We may, at the same time, perceive how mistaken are Morino, Houbigant, Kennicott and others, who mostly prefer the Samaritan readings to ours, and how even the more moderate De Rossi<sup>2</sup> is at fault. For, in his treatise prefacing the enumeration of different readings of the text, he concedes to the Samaritan a legitimate source, of which he afterwards makes use to correct the sacred code (Part II Canon B.). In the first part thereof, he regards the Hebrew manuscript and the Samaritan as distinct copies of the same original. One he calls ancient, Israelitish, ante-Babylonian, ante-Ezraic, unaltered, and that is, the Samaritan. The other he styles Jewish, Palestinian, Ezraic, reformed, and this is ours.

<sup>1</sup> No doubt 'Law,' in this case, as in many others, stands for 'teaching,' and it alludes to the chapter of Deuteronomy recording the blessings and the curses for there it is that this sentence occurs in our text.—(Translator).

<sup>2</sup> John B. DeRossi—a Catholic clergyman, librarian to the Duchess of Parma—wrote very learnedly on various scriptural topics in the Latin language. But he is best known in the world of letters for his "Historical Dictionary of Hebrew Authors and of their Works." It has been translated from the Latin into different languages. During the years 1867–8, Mayer Sulzberger made an English version from the German, and published the whole of that work 'seriatim' in the *Occident*, then edited by the late Rev. Isaac Leeser.—(Translator).



We have shown clearly enough in the above analysis, that reformed and wilfully altered is, in all truth, the Samaritan; for the very reason that so many apparent incongruities, obscure sentences and ambiguous sayings are effectively removed; and that pure, genuine, intact is the Hebrew text, in which all those anomalies and seemingly incorrect passages still exist. The very same De Rossi set down as a fact in his critical canons—forming the second part of the aforementioned treatise—that every language, as every age, presents irregularities and that we should not rashly put them aside as mistakes, but rather deem them the correct intention of the writer, and be very chary in laying our hand thereon. For it is against all rules to substitute for them words that sound better, or appear more suitable, but we should let those irregularities remain untouched.<sup>1</sup> From this wise criterion, we may infer with certainty that true and original are the readings of the Hebrew codes—though many a time anomalous and apparently incorrect—and that spurious and adulterated are those of the Samaritan text, so entirely free from incongruities.<sup>2</sup>

Having descanted at considerable length on the Samaritan Pentateuch, with the view of setting forth and illustrating the classes, into which its readings that clash with ours, were with such rare discernment, divided by Gesenius, I must be allowed to dwell on it a little longer, and add a suggestion of my own to those of the authority cited.

<sup>1</sup> I have given the substance of a passage from DeRossi which Luzzatto quotes in full—(Translator).

<sup>2</sup> In concluding the translation of this part of Luzzatto's "Introduction to the Pentateuch" where Gesenius' writings were chosen as a guide, I am compelled by a sense of justice to say, that the immortal author composed it for the benefit of the students at the Rabbinical college as early as 1829. For, since then, Raphael Kirchheim issued an exceedingly learned production in Hebrew called "Karme Shomeron," where much that is contained in this part of the Introduction is methodically enlarged upon. The author has also enriched his book with an erudite letter from the pen of the late Professor at Padua, it being a criticism on the religious songs used by the Samaritans.—(Translator).



It strikes me that this critical and very learned linguist who, in the course of his researches came very close to the truth, halted just one step back and did not fully reach it. He detected the various characters of the various readings of that refashioned text, but he did not reach, or at least set forth, the general aim, the leading principle. He did not penetrate, I say, into that central and all-pervading cause, whence those alterations arose. As to myself, I discover, unless my judgment misleads me, that the motive power impelling the Samaritans to make such changes, was one, uniform and universal, and that is, to get rid of the traditions. The implacable hatred they have harbored and still harbor toward the Jews, the sole depositaries of the oral teachings, hindering those schismatics from acknowledging and accepting what the others possessed, dictated the bold and impious expedient of discarding it entirely. In fact, they do not recognize any tradition whatever. Now, to do away with every oral explanation and elucidation, of which quite a large number of passages, obscure, ambiguous, and in a manner irregular in the sacred code stand in need, they have striven to alter all those passages and mould them in a form, exhibiting neither obscurity nor anomaly, and therefore in no need for illustration and exposition. So, they thought they could become utterly independent of the detested Jews.

This seems to me to be the ruling spirit of all, or nearly all, the Samaritan readings both in the changes and in the additions. Such of them that do not bear me out, are involuntary mistakes of an amanuensis, or a few later alterations perpetrated for the sake of favoring the Samaritan schism. The above consideration, while offering a plausible reason for the monstrous discrepancies in the text at issue, furnishes also an obvious proof of the antiquity of the oral traditions, which the Karaites would make us believe never to have existed before Simeon ben Shatah.<sup>2</sup> This much will suffice.

<sup>2</sup> The readers conversant with the Talmud, or with the writings of Josephus, will remember that when King Alexander Janaeus in his mad

Another long and determined opposition to the Hebrew text was made by several critics, who took for their ground the notably numerous discrepancies between it and the celebrated version of the seventy sages. Indeed, once admitted, as many ancient writers have told us, that the translation was undertaken by just seventy sages, whom the high priest himself had chosen, in the time and at the request of King Ptolemy Philadelphus, it must follow that such a rendering of the Scriptures could have been all that might be possibly expected; aye, exact, faithful and corresponding precisely to the original. On seeing, therefore, that the same version is egregiously in conflict with our text, not a few were led to think that the latter had been wilfully distorted and tampered with. And most readily some Christians jumped at that conclusion, because a number of passages met in the books of the New Testament are quoted agreeably to the Septuagint translation, and differently altogether from the way in which they sound in the Hebrew text. This became a strong weapon which some ancient

anger against the Pharisees, killed many of the sages, Simeon ben Shatah, whose sister was the royal consort, eluded detection and escaped. The Karaites pretend that he fled to Alexandria, where many Israelites resided and that during the exile he invented a new law, which he palmed off as a tradition from the fathers, and around which, when allowed to return to Palestine, he rallied the bulk of the nation. This incredible story is insisted upon by a great champion of Karaism, Mordecai Nissan, in his work entitled 'Dod Mordechai.' His allegations, however, rest on fancy; for it has not been positively proved that Simeon ben Shatah went to Alexandria, nor can the idea that such an imposition could be successfully practiced on a whole people, be entertained for a moment, since the very Sadducees, the deadly foes of Rabbinism, never brought forth the charge. The fact is that the Karaites owe their origin to a certain R. Anan said to have lived in Persia, during the eighth century of the vulgar era, for by their own confession, they then assumed that name. It would exceed the limits of a note to discuss whether disappointment at not having been chosen to the high position of Exilarch (Resh Galuta) or other causes gave origin to the schism. The Karaites hold this Anan in the greatest veneration and assume that in keeping aloof from the rest of the Jews they obey his peremptory order. Members of that sect are principally found in the Crimea, but they have also synagogues in some cities of the East.—(Translator).

Christian writers wielded, in striking the Jews when accusing them of having acted in bad faith and with malice aforethought by adulterating their books. And this constitutes also the principal missile in the hand of Louis Cappellus in his widely-known critical strictures against the integrity of our hallowed volumes, and in which he was followed by a large number of critics.

All are aware that the Talmudists, in the first chapter of treatise Megillah (9a,b), make mention of thirteen alterations advisedly made by those translators.<sup>1</sup> Out of them however, only four can be discovered in the version, as now existing; but as a compensation for the remaining nine, thousands of the most prodigious nature can be counted therein. To account for such inconsistencies, without impugning the integrity of the sacred text, I present the hypothesis in which the famous Rabbi Azariah<sup>2</sup> indulged in the ninth chapter of his *Meor 'Enayim*.

He thinks that since the days of Ezra, our learned men had set about making a translation of the Pentateuch in the Chaldaic language, which might serve the people, and facilitate the understanding of the original. He then supposes that through the carelessness of the commonalty for whom the version had been undertaken, errors were suffered

<sup>1</sup> For instance, 'I will make man' instead 'Let us make man,' and similar emendations, to avoid creating a wrong impression of the tenets of Judaism, or to prevent offending the sensitiveness of the king.—(Translator).

<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Azariah of the Adomim (DeRossi)—a man of small size and weak body, but a giant in intellect, and a mighty seeker after truth, wrote in Italy about the middle of the 16th century. His opinions on many points are deservedly quoted as authoritative, but like others, he embraced the erroneous notion about a Greek translation of Holy Writ completed by seventy Palestinian sages, and all the legends accompanying it. The unsparing criticism of our age has exploded that notion. While admitting that a version of the five books of Moses may have been undertaken as early as three centuries before the vulgar era for the use of Alexandrian Jews, mostly ignorant of the Hebrew, it has been shown that the present Greek rendering of the Scriptures cannot claim the antiquity and venerable origin which has been ascribed to it.—(Translator). [See pp. 58-67. [G]]

to creep in, so that it grew to be extremely faulty. Then, again, he imagines that the seventy sages chose to shape their rendering of the Bible after the Chaldaic text, because in common use, rather than after the Hebrew, which few read and comprehended.

I find this hypothesis untenable, for the reason that Aramaic paraphrases were not committed to writing till long after that, but the same rule was applied to them as to the old traditions.<sup>1</sup> In fact, it is evident from the Talmud that the so-called *Meturgeman* (interpreter), recited the translation of the Scriptural section for the week in the various places of public worship, always by rote, and never from a manuscript.<sup>2</sup>

So true it is that the renowned Ritba,<sup>3</sup> commenting on the first chapter of Treatise *Megillah*, alleges as a

<sup>1</sup> Our author speaks learnedly on this subject in the preface to his 'Oheb Ger.'—(Translator).

<sup>2</sup> In connection with the question of the appointment anciently made of a Meturgeman, it may here be observed, in passing, that they who believe that the interspersing throughout the Hebrew ritual of the languages of different countries through which we are scattered, is simply the revival of an olden practice, labor under a palpable misapprehension. Though our people at large spoke not the Hebrew, yet nothing but that sacred tongue was employed at the Temple and in the Synagogues during the Divine service, from Ezra down to the days within the recollection of the present generation. The 'Kaddish', the only prayer in Aramaic, I have reason to think, was originally an invocation with which the Rabbis concluded their usual studies and gradually became embodied in the liturgy and enlarged, particularly by the Sephardic Jews, who contracted also the habit of publicly translating into Spanish some Haftarat, and some elegies for various fasts. In ancient times, however, the Parashah, or portion of the Pentateuch not belonging properly to the ritual, after having been first read in the original, was translated or rather paraphrased in Aramaic, as the means of popular instruction. The Derashah of later days may have superseded that practice. At all events, the art of printing, which places into the hand of every person a book, having on one side the holy language, and on the other the vernacular, would seem to answer the purpose, especially so, when an explanatory lecture is superadded.—(Translator).

<sup>3</sup> Rabbi Yom Tob ben Abraham, of Seville (14th century) a copious writer on the Talmud.—(Translator).



reason why R. Joseph being blind, discoursed on the Chaldaic paraphrase, that just because he was deprived of sight and dared not recite the written Law from memory, he habitually rehearsed the Aramaic version, and quoted it, as if it were a part of the oral traditions.

Besides, it is not credible that the enlightened and zealous Sages, of whom we had a great number during the second Temple, could have neglected a manuscript, said to be in the hands of all classes of their people, to such an extent as to let it vary materially from the hallowed original in the manner we perceive that the Greek version does vary.

The same R. Azariah is not backward in producing another hypothesis, to satisfy the reader who may not have been pleased with the former. Here is the process by which he tries to loosen a tight knot. He surmises that the veritable Septuagint-translation exists no more; that it either perished in the great fire which consumed the Alexandrian library, during the Roman wars, or that, if it did not become a prey to the burning flames, the Greeks of Alexandria, who have always borne ill-will to the Israelites, and who have been noted for their mendacious and false character, disfigured it maliciously and corrupted it.

We shall not stop to put the two suppositions in the scales of judgment and determine which of them preponderates. Nor will we argue the point as to whom the present Greek version must be attributed. Suffice it for us simply to observe that the traces of incorrectness and of ignorance on the part of the authors are so glaring, that it loses every title to credence, and it cannot therefore be contrasted in the slightest degree with the sacred text which we possess.

With regard to the anomalies met in the Greek version, we may cite that in Genesis xxviii, 19, where the translator, mistaking the conjunction *Ulam* (however) for a noun, coupled it with the following word, and made the sentence run so: "But the name of the city was at first *Ulam-Luz*." And to be consistent in blundering, he did the same in Judges xviii, 28, where he wrote, "But the name of the city was at first *Ulam-Laish*." Even in the third chapter of the Book of



Lamentations, where the division of the short verses leaves no room for the slightest doubt, because three of each begin with the same letter, forming a kind of alphabetical acrostic, that translator working with eyes veiled by ignorance, has sometimes joined the last word of one verse with the beginning of the next, destroying both the sense of the original and the plan chosen by the inspired author.

But an error which must raise a smile by reason of the glaring contradiction it involved, is that occurring in the Book of Esther vii, 4, where the queen revealing the cause of her sorrow has been made to say: "I and my people have been sold to destruction, to slaughter and to *bondage*," instead of "extermination," while she immediately after expressed this thought, "If we had been sold as bondmen and bondwomen, I would have remained silent." So likewise in I Samuel xii, 3, taking the verb "*Va-a'lim*" for the noun *Na'alaim*, the translator rendered the passage in this ludicrous manner, "From whom have I taken any ransom or *shoes*?" And similar huge errors can be met there, almost beyond enumeration.<sup>1</sup>

The above will be enough to show of what little weight can be the authority of a translation spoiled by such monstrosities, and how unworthy it is of the honorable name of "Septuagint" it has received. In fact, the most sensible among critics, mainly those of modern times, have substituted for that appellation the name of "a version from an Alexandrian translator."

Once that the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch has succeeded in repelling the attacks which many critics, who took their stand on the Samaritan or Alexandrian side, have made on it, we may pronounce it perfectly sound and reliable throughout. That as far back as fourteen centuries ago it was exactly as we possess it, the writing of St. Jerome can testify. Even versions still more ancient, such as those of

<sup>1</sup> I have again, taken the liberty of reducing the number of illustrations, because some of them could not have been intelligently presented to the reader except in Hebrew characters, and I would have been compelled to add considerably to typographical labor.—(Translator).

Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, agree with that which exists at present. And if, at times, they differ, the circumstance proceeds merely from the way in which those translators were wont to read the original, destitute of vowel points, in their days. The same may be said of Onkelos, who, like the translator mentioned first, embraced Judaism.<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi Azariah, in the forty-fifth chapter of his work, imitating our olden preceptors, bestows a meed of praise on Aquila. He acknowledges, however, that the version loses much in beauty because too servile, too closely attached to the letter of the original. The other translators,

<sup>1</sup> Onkelos and Aquilas had been, not infrequently, confounded together as one person, called by two names somewhat similar in sound. Azariah De Rossi, with that acumen and depth of research, which entitle him to preeminence amid the ranks of critics, proved them to be two distinct individuals. The former—a Roman—cast off the errors of heathenism and became a believer in the Unity during the reign of Claudius or Nero. He completed an Aramaic version of the Pentateuch, which won the approval of the Sages of his time and which is still regarded with such veneration by pious Israelites that they read a portion thereof every week. Aquilas—a Greek—craved to be admitted into the Abrahamic covenant in the days of Hadrian. He translated all the Scriptures in his own native language, but I am unable to say, from personal knowledge, whether his work is extant. R. Azariah warns us not to mistake Aquilas the righteous proselyte for Aquila the apostate, spoken of occasionally in the New Testament.—(Translator).

Since this annotation was written, critics, on whose decision persons may implicitly rely, have proved that Onkelos is a corrupt spelling of the name Akilas, or Aquila,—the translator of the Pentateuch in the Greek language, from which version the Aramaic was subsequently made. Professor Luzzatto who wrote his *Oheb Ger*, on the so called Onkelos version, and in a beautiful Aramaic composition apostrophised the supposed proselyte Onkelos, retracted in later years and coincided with the opinion of modern critics.—(Translator).

[Onkelos and Aquila are not to be identified as one person. It is, however, generally agreed, that the Rabbis often confused the two names. In fact, it is certain that Onkelos had nothing to do with the present Aramaic version bearing his name, which was the standard version current in Babylon, and should therefore be more correctly referred to as the Babylonian version. The supposition that the Aramaic which we now have is a translation of the Greek version made by Aquila is not generally accepted by scholars. [G]]

and particularly the last, I mean our Onkelos, often rest contented with expressing the ideas clearly, without caring to give the precise term corresponding to the Hebrew. Hence a reader who would judge of the wording of the text from the paraphrase would be easily misled. Hence, again, arose the mistake of the already quoted Cappellus, who, finding the sentence "My doctrine shall drop as rain," rendered by Onkelos *Yebassam Kemitra Ulphani*, infers that Moses, instead of writing "Ya'aroph," (shall drop), had written *Ye'erab* (shall be agreeable), corresponding to the Chaldaic *Yebassam*. He surely would have been puzzled to explain to us how the paraphrast read the following part of the sentence, "my speech shall distill like dew," for in place of "shall distill," Onkelos translated *shall be received*. Very evidently in this as in many other instances, we must recognize the effect of a free rendering of the original, and not any diversity existing in the copies of the text itself.

Equally at fault is J. B. de Rossi, who asserts that Onkelos did not have before him our manuscript, since he translated the following passage thus: "Abraham lifted up his eyes, after these things (had happened) and behold! *One* ram had been caught in a thicket" (Genesis xxii.13). I am willing to acknowledge that the word *hada* (one) intrudes in this case, nor have I met it in the most accurately printed editions; but I may point to the term *Batar* (after) as to an obvious demonstration that he did have the same manuscript; only it suited the Aramaic paraphrast to transpose somewhat the construction of the sentence.

Now: if the most ancient translations of the Hebrew text do not disclose what can, in the least, invalidate its integrity, the manuscripts collated with exceeding industry are not at all more successful in bringing about that result. With unwearied perseverance and an unsparing outlay of means, the Englishman Benjamin Kennicott undertook and executed such a collation half a century ago. He noted down in the Bible he published, the minutest variations, as well as the most stupendous mistakes of the amanuenses,

which either himself or his co-laborers had observed in about 600 manuscripts of the whole of the Pentateuch, or portions thereof. J. B. de Rossi extended that collation to as many as 1200 manuscripts, besides 300 printed editions. By dignifying with the title of *Variae Lectiones* the hugest blunders, met in the most incorrect copies, thousands of such *Variae Lectiones* can be made up. But then they would be devoid of any foundation to stand on. They would be so beyond doubt as far as it regards the Pentateuch, that this very J. B. de Rossi in his compendium of Scriptural criticism, where he purposes to set to view the usefulness of his immense labor, and the emendations which might be made to the sacred text, can suggest only one, and that in Leviticus xxvi, 39. Instead of reading "They who are left of you shall pine away for their iniquity in the land of your enemies," he would alter the pronoun and make it read "in the land of *their* enemies."<sup>1</sup>

This emendation, however, had already engaged the attention of our Norzi, and was rejected in his Biblical annotations known by the name of "Minhat Shai."

Truly, when we consider with what religious zeal, nay, conscientious scrupulousness, our teachers have striven that the holiest heirloom bequeathed by the fathers, that which constitutes our only riches, our guide, our comfort and our hope, be kept uninjured, it could not have happened otherwise than that the writings of the Arch-prophet should continue faultless. The marginal readings prove, furthermore, according to some, the pious fear with which our critics and sages—unlike the Samaritans in the license they took—guarded the holy original, not daring to lay a hand

<sup>1</sup> In consulting Luzzatto's version of the Pentateuch I noticed that he had accepted the emendation, possibly to make it agree with the context and with identical expressions before and after. So has Reggio and so have other Italian translators, greatly to my surprise. For, I am bold enough to say, that without intimating the necessity of altering the passage even thus slightly, it might have remained as it stands, and have done no violence to the genius of the Hebrew language, especially so because in verse 34, Moses writes, "You will be then in the land of 'your' enemies."—(Translator).

thereon, even when an error of the amanuensis was apparent. So that leaving the text as it was found, they confined themselves to noting in the margin the reading which they deemed the more correct.

It is noteworthy, in this respect, that in proportion to the extent of the writings, such marginal emendations are much less in number throughout the Pentateuch, than through the other books of the sacred Canon.

And in connection with this subject, it may here likewise be fittingly mentioned that among the so-called various readings of the Palestinian and Babylonian schools, namely, some discrepancies between the manuscripts of the one and those of the other, there can be found only one in relation to the books of Moses.<sup>1</sup>

As to the disagreements between Asher and Naftali, they apply exclusively to punctuations, and never to words or even to the letters.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The differences mainly consist in some particles capable of being interchanged without materially affecting the sense. The Palestinian school has, however prevailed, and I think all books are now printed accordingly. R. Elijah Bahur, of whom I spoke in a former note, writes that he did not find even a single difference between the two schools regarding the Pentateuch.—(Translator).

<sup>2</sup> Ben Asher and Ben Naftali are said to have lived in the 11th century, and to have disagreed respecting some vowel points, accents, and other grammatical niceties. The former appears to have drawn to his side the most accredited among our Rabbis. Maimonides makes particular mention of Ben Asher, and declares that because he had spent a long time in Jerusalem in order to form the ripest judgment as to the manner in which the scroll of the Law should be written and because he showed himself very precise and accurate he was deserving of being relied on. Any more light thrown upon the history and influence of these two Masorites, would be very welcome to the lovers of Hebrew literature, and I seek it at the hands of my learned colleagues. I cannot put any faith, however, in the statement of Yahia in his "Shalshet Hakkabbalah" that they claimed descent from the tribes of which they bore the names. But whosoever they may have been, their efforts in examining with such extreme care the sacred text to keep it free from the slightest flaw, command our thanks. Indeed, when we think of the labor of the Masorites in general—unnecessarily minute as some may consider it—we cannot but be struck with wonder at the herculean



Now that I have sufficiently proved—as I think—by critical reasonings the genuineness of the sacred text of the Pentateuch, it behooves me, according to rule, to speak of its hermeneutical interpretation. I must establish the bases, the principles and standard, by which to be guided in seeking to arrive at a correct understanding of the heavenly volumes.

At the very root of Scriptural hermeneutics there stands, beyond all doubt, tradition. The holy books are written in a language dead already for many centuries; a language which is no more the vernacular of any known people. Consequently, our acquaintance with it can only proceed from the teachings handed down by the ancients and orally preserved. Without such teachings, even the reading of those holy books would be an impossibility, since it is from tradition that we have become conversant with the sound of the letters of the alphabet.

This constitutes the argument used by Hillel, the elder, when he wished to set to rights the mind of the idolator, who, in embracing Judaism, had determined to lay aside the oral Law. He admitted the applicant as a proselyte and began to offer some instruction. At the first lesson, he showed the alphabet in the regular way; on the morrow he inverted the order, and gave the letters a pronunciation different altogether from that of the preceding day. The new pupil noticed the change, and asked whether his preceptor was not reversing the previous teaching. "You perceive," answered Hillel, "that by the bare reading of the Written Law you cannot learn unless you put faith in my sayings. You should then depend on me also when I explain what has been received traditionally" (Shabbat 31a).

True: time has rendered our knowledge of the oral interpretation of words imperfect. Our own classical writers concede this; nay, the Talmudists tell us so,<sup>1</sup> but

task they performed to the very best of their abilities, so that the volumes we cherish should not be corrupted in the course of ages.—(Translator).

<sup>1</sup> With a candor and humility worthy of all praise, the sages of the

that does not imply, as Father Morino insinuates, that we do not at all possess any exact notion of the sacred language. On the contrary, the sincerity which our predecessors evinced in admitting their doubts of the precise value of several terms, proves their positive acquaintance with all others. In fact, reason suggests that all expressions relative, at least, to the Divine behests, which our nation practised without interruption, ought to be considered as distinctly understood by us in their every bearing. Thus, by way of illustration, as our progenitors even abstained from certain viands, from the wearing of certain garments, and similar things; and as they constantly exercised certain religious ceremonies, therefore all unprejudiced thinkers should rest satisfied that only in that sense, and in no other, were those expressions conveying the knowledge of such precepts always understood. So that, at all events, we possess a sufficient *practical* knowledge of our holy tongue. He who should insist on denying us an acquaintance with the term *Hamez* (leaven,) and *Mazzah* (unleavened cake) *Zemer* (wool), and *Pishtim* (linen), words connected with observances followed from time immemorial, would display an unsound mind. Yet, he may with reason deny us a clear comprehension of some of the terms, describing the precious stones which shone on the breast-plate of the high-priest, or of various trees mentioned in the Bible; whether *Berosh* is "Pine," *Tidhar* "Cypress," or plants of another kind.

In placing tradition at the basis of Scriptural hermeneutics, I did not intend to intimate that when explaining the Divine writings, we must follow religiously and exclusively the sense given them by the revered Sages of the Mishnah

Talmud unhesitatingly confessed that they had forgotten the meaning of several Biblical words, and that often mere chance brought the knowledge thereof back to their minds. All will remember how, at a period of our history in which the Hebrew language was going into disuse to be superseded by the Aramaic, some expressions of the maid-servant of Rabbi Judah, the compiler of the Mishnah, taught the signification of terms met in the books of the Prophets and the Hagiographa. The reader may be referred to treatise Rosh Hashanah (26 a-b) for a full discussion of this subject—(Translator).

and Talmud. No: such a notion would frequently lead astray. This is, of course, obvious to every understanding, so far as it concerns historical narratives, which the Talmud presents allegorically. Our most classical commentators, Nachmanides, Rashi, Kimchi, have cautioned us against falling into a misapprehension of that kind. But the same remark is not less applicable to passages having reference to tenets, obligations and prohibitions, and even to doctrines and beliefs. And notwithstanding that this topic properly belongs to dogmatical hermeneutics, I find myself obliged before I proceed with the regular exposition of the sacred books, to elucidate it.

I will commence my illustration by alluding to the method chosen by the Rabbis to support a belief, and then I will pass on to speak of that which has a bearing on laws and rites.

The dogmas, which the bulk of our nation has professed at all times are, and must undoubtedly be deemed, sacred and true. Not so, however, respecting the proofs which our Sages advance in corroboration thereof. For example, a great number of prophecies from Isaiah are interpreted in the Talmud as alluding to the Messianic era, whereas our most orthodox expositors connect them with quite different periods. Indeed, Albo in the fourth treatise of his "Book of Creeds," makes mention of a R. Hyam Galippa, who in a pamphlet entitled "A Letter on the Redemption," endeavored to show that in none of his predictions did that inspired writer have the Messiah before his mind.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Already as early as the ninth century, the idea that prophetic predictions had received their fulfillment during the existence of the First and Second Temple, seemed to have counted many followers. For, Rabbenu Saadya Gaon tries strongly to argue against it in his "Emunot we-De'ot." But whatever opinion may be held touching that which the son of Amoz glowingly penned to warn and to console his contemporaries and successors, certain it is that the realization of the grandest of all predictions, that with which his second chapter opens, and which Micah reproduced, has not yet been witnessed. Only when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, and they shall not learn war any more," when diplomacy will work out fraternization, and

Albo does not, on that account, bring any charge against the writer of the epistle, but he rather dwells considerably on the point under discussion, to demonstrate that interpretations of that kind are not antagonistic to orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup>

So also the Talmudists in the eleventh chapter of treatise Sanhedrin, produce in favor of the dogma of resurrection, many passages which are taken by our best commentators in a totally different sense. Let what I have said suffice to demonstrate that in matters of belief the means for support to which the Rabbis resorted cannot be taken as a real evidence of its truth. I will now seek into that which relates to practices, laws, and precepts.

The rule that whenever a disparity of view exists among judges, the decision should be pronounced according to the opinion of the majority, is, beyond doubt, very just and indispensable. Now it would seem as if the Sages of both the Mishnah and Talmud had derived that principle from the concluding portion of the sentence in Exodus xxiii. 2, namely: "*Ahare rabbim lehattot*," though the real signification of those words,—as several wise expositors attest, and as the very position of the distinguishing accents prove still more,—is far from supporting it.<sup>2</sup>

not selfish aggrandizement, we shall see the confirmation of what we have been promised. "Out of Zion"—our national capital,—"instruction shall issue forth", and "out of Jerusalem"—the seat of our reconstructed Temple,—"the word of the everlasting Lord."—(Translator).

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew scholars know that Joseph Albo composed the celebrated "*Sepher Ikkarim*" in the 15th century, to controvert the opinion of Maimonides that the Jewish religion has thirteen creeds for its foundation. Admitting the belief in the restoration of the outcasts of Judea to their former state, under the leadership of a Messiah, Albo contends, nevertheless, that Judaism proper rests solely upon three cardinal principles, namely, the existence of one God, revelation, and accountability for our deeds.—(Translator).

<sup>2</sup> The sentence runs literally thus, 'Thou shalt not be after many to do evil, and thou shalt not testify about a quarrel to incline after many to pervert' (judgment). As Luzzatto observes, nothing is here plainly stated from which the principle that "the majority rules" can be deduced. Still, it may be evolved from the first part of the sentence, for, as we are cautioned against following a multitude to do wrong, we may infer-

We are then forcibly led to have recourse to a principle accepted, with one accord, by our theologians, and that is, that the teachers of our people were wont to base such laws and regulations, as the fathers had unerringly handed down, upon some Biblical text. They did not do so, under the impression that the Scriptures in those particular instances favored the tradition, but simply because the texts served to fasten the decisions in the mind of the disciples—becoming aids to memory—and probably also, in order to enhance the value of the traditions in the sight of the commonalty who might have denied them the importance to which they are entitled, unless shown that Holy Writ could be cited in their support.

It is in this sense that the Talmudists themselves often conclude their tuition, by declaring that the sentence is merely an *Asmachta* (a slight support).

The position of vowel points and distinguishing accents,<sup>1</sup> which, in ancient times, was taught to children between the ages of five and ten to enable them to read correctly, is to be considered also among oral traditions.

In like manner as the lapse of time, migrations and persecutions gave rise to doubts and controversies respecting oral traditions which pertain to the sacred language proper, so the same causes produced identical effects regarding Biblical accentuations. For that reason we notice in the Talmud a degree of uncertainty and a considerable disparity of opinions on this subject. In treatise Kiddushin (30a) the question is raised about the right word forming the middle of the whole number of words contained in the Pentateuch, and there the candid acknowledgement is

entially learn that we should side with it to do right. In this manner, ibn Ezra and others have sought to account for the Rabbinical dictum, based on the words "*Ahare rabbim lehattoi*." That the expression popularly conveyed the idea of passing judgment according to the declaration made by the majority is very evident from the paraphrase of the proselyte Onkelos, who translated it "*Batar Sagguie Shalem dina*," viz: "after the largest number complete the sentence."—(Translator).

<sup>1</sup> Neginoth, as the Israelites of the German ritual call them, or Te'amin, as they are termed by the Sephardim.—Translator.



made that the Rabbis could not exactly tell even the division of sentences; for a Scriptural passage, which in Babylon was read without any pause, the Palestinian Jews recited as if divided into three distinct sections. Furthermore, a renowned Sage inquired of another whether a certain term was to be understood in the masculine or in the feminine gender ('Abodah Zarah 29b).<sup>1</sup> And again, whether an expression employed in Exodus, xxiv, 5, was to be applied in a general or in a special sense, (deeming it ambiguous). In short, the Sages confessed that in five or six instances they could not decide where the accent properly belonged, so that the sentence might be readily understood, without presenting any uncertainty.

Such doubts or disputes, however, were removed after the age of the Talmudists by the "Punctuators," or authors of the points, who, guided by tradition and by a bright and very keen understanding, invented the signs which serve as vowels, together with the prosodical marks (for chanting) and attached them to the text of all the sacred books; a grand work worthy of admiration. Hence in seeking to explain the original, we should pay the greatest deference to the vowels and accents, studying their position carefully.

In fact, we perceive that our best commentators often bring forth the authority of the "Punctuators," and some expressly recommend to keep it in view as a standard. So Ibn Ezra at the commencement of his "*Mozene Leshon ha-Kodesh*," uses this expression, "Let me advise students to follow closely the authors of accentuation, and to discard any exposition at variance with their arrangement." The same writer, towards the end of his "*Sepher Zahot*," uttered this sentiment: "He who taught us the accents of pause, could not have been in error—notably so if Ezra be recognized as the inventor thereof—for really the originator of the rules of accentuation has not an equal in knowledge, since we see how, throughout Holy Writ, he has marked the pause wherever it belongs."

<sup>1</sup> All know that the vowel-points often determine the gender.—(Translator).

So also in the beginning of his commentary on Isaiah he says: "An essential rule is to take the prosodical signs as a guide." The famous Rashi repeatedly alludes to the vowel-points and cantillation marks as authoritative. Thus, commenting on the opening pages of Ezekiel, he owns that had he not noticed the *Zakeph Gadol*, (a dividing accent, answering to the English *colon*,) he would not have known how to explain the sentence.

But notwithstanding that the authority of the "Punctuators" is really deserving of the highest respect and consideration, still it is not infallible; nor is it absolutely incontestable, so far as it regards Biblical Hermeneutics. Witness, the celebrated Kimchi, who, in his comment on the twelfth chapter of Hosea, unequivocally says, "The meaning of the text does not always agree with its punctuation." This principle is clearly carried out by the practice of our most accredited expositors both among the ancients and moderns. There cannot be met a single one who did not, occasionally, offer an explanation jarring with the position of the vowel-points or, at least, with the cantillation signs

Here are some examples:

One of the Geonim<sup>1</sup>—so writes Ibn Ezra in the beginning of his "*Sepher Mozenayim*," says that in ten instances Biblical verses, separated in the text, are joined together in their sense.

Rashi to II Samuel xii, 30, prefers the word *Milcom* to

<sup>1</sup> Presidents of the Academies, flourishing in Persia, from about the 7th to about the 11th century of the vulgar era. The title "Gaon" is of uncertain origin. It cannot, I think, be considered Hebrew; for, that word is usually employed in the Bible in the sense of "pride," and never adjectively, but as a noun.—(Translator).

[The term Gaon applied to the heads of the academies of Sura and Pumbedita, during the last four centuries of their existence, is probably an abbreviation of "Geon Jacob" (Psalms xlvii.5), the name by which the largest Yeshibah in any community in Palestine and Babylon (and perhaps also in Egypt) was known. (see J.Q.R., new series, I, 55). H. Malter suggests that the title is equivalent to Excellency or Highness (Saadia Gaon, p. 97). [G]]

"*Malcam*" (their king) as it now stands in the original,<sup>1</sup> and attaches this meaning to the sentence: "He (David) took the crown of Milcom from off his head."

R. Moses Cohen to Psalms cxxxix, 14, not minding the accents of pause, renders the sentence so: "Wonderful are Thy works, and my knowing soul" instead of, "and my soul knoweth it."

Rashbam (R. Samuel Ben Meir, a grand-son of Rashi) to Exodus xiv, 30. "Israel, being on the shore of the sea, saw the Egyptians dead" and not, "Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the sea shore." Ibn Ezra to Deuteronomy xxxii, 5. "He (Israel) corrupted himself (saying) they are not His children" (against the prosodical signs which would rather favor this interpretation: "Is the fault His? No: it is His children's blemish.") And likewise, Maimonides, Nachmanides, Bahya, Albo, Hezkoni, Abarbanel, Sforino, Mendelssohn, Wessely, give evidence of their having, at times, departed from the rules of accentuation, and adhered to what they considered more consonant with the text.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I do not have the comment of Rashi on the "Early Prophets" at hand; but, I suppose, the great expositor had reference to the chief idol of the people of Ammon against whom David was waging war. "Milcom" and "Moloch" are identical, and as the abominable idol was half human and half ox, he may probably have been ornamented with a crown. I will stand corrected, if my supposition is wrong.—(Translator). [Several modern Bible students accept Rashi's emendation here and also in the parallel passage in I Chronicles xx. 2. The same emendation is made in Jeremiah xlix. 1, 3; Zephaniah I. 5; Amos I. 15. While Moloch and Milcom are regarded as identical, there is a difference of opinion whether these two names do not apply to different forms of worship of the god (Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible, s. v. Moloch) [G]]

<sup>2</sup> Luzzatto quotes copiously, in Hebrew, from each of the named writers to support his assertion. I have, in this case, more than in any other, as far as I have translated, taken liberties with the original by adding words which I deemed explanatory; and, again, by omitting a great deal, which entailed much labor, and which I fear I could not lucidly reproduce in English. I refer my readers to pages 33 and 34 of the Introduction, for fuller information on the subject under discussion.—(Trynslator).

The example of all these accredited commentators and theologians sufficiently shows that the authority of the punctuators is not altogether unquestionable, while it also corroborates the truth of the origin which I have attributed to the vowels and accents, against the opinion of those who would ascribe their invention to Ezra, or even to the prophets.<sup>1</sup>

I will now add that a letter by our author, revealing amazing erudition and the most diligent research was published in the ninth volume of "*Kerem Hemed*." There he proved that in 150 instances, throughout the Bible, the cantillation signs had been by mistake—probably through the ignorance of copyists—wrongly chosen.—(Translator).

<sup>1</sup> Luzzatto means that if the important art had emanated from so high a source, none would have ventured to set himself against it. Among topics engaging the attention of a lover of sacred literature that which concerns the authorship of the punctuation and the prosodical accents must needs be of great interest. There is not the slightest doubt that the Mosaic books were handed down without any marks whatever; that they were simply a continuous number of letters, forming words, well understood by all, during many ages, while the Hebrew remained a living language. According to some authors, Ezra introduced vowel-points, to aid his contemporaries, not very conversant with the sacred tongue; and they who hold that opinion, quote a passage in *Nehemiah* viii 8, to their support. But the help thus invoked is very feeble, and from internal evidences in the Talmud, the truth must strike the mind that no accent of any kind was known till after the redaction of both the Jerusalem and the Babylonian Gemaras. The first to make the bold assertion was the critic I have repeatedly cited R. Elijah Bahur. Of course, he found many opponents but as his reasons stood on solid ground, he found also many adherents. Luzzatto accepts the ideas advanced by the great German Jew, but he disagrees with him respecting the time of the invention of the vowels. In his "*Dialogue on the Kabbalah*," he treats the subject at great length in his usual masterly manner and demonstrates that the art of marking letters, etc., was introduced not by the Sages of Tiberias in the 5th century, as alleged, but still later, by the 'Saboraim,' or successors to the Sages of the Talmud living in Persia. While tracing these few lines, I am reminded of a pleasing circumstance connected with the recently celebrated Centennial of American Independence. Being at the International Exhibition, my attention was directed to a copy of the Bible in the Russian department. In it I saw that the vowel points were all placed above the letter, and not, as among us, some above, some within, and some under. Then I remember to have read what had reference to that curious incident.



The Chaldaic version of Onkelos may also be assigned a place among oral traditions,<sup>1</sup> for as the Talmud observes

After a good deal of searching, I met the following in a note by Luzzatto, at the end of the treatise on 'The Antiquity of Punctuation and Accentuation': In the Crimea another mode of marking the letters has been discovered to exist, namely, the signs are all on the top. . . . nor is there any distinction between a "patah" and a "segol." I now regret exceedingly that I did not take notice of this peculiarity, and that I could not ascertain where the volume had been written, as it was inside of a case which none dared touch.—(Translator).

[The so-called superlinear or Babylonian vocalization was first discovered in 1839 in manuscripts coming from Crimea. Later other manuscripts coming from Yemen having the same system of vocalization were brought to light. In 1894, a third system of vocalization was discovered, which is now known as the Palestinian. The exact date of the introduction of the vowel system in Hebrew cannot be established although it is generally agreed that this did not occur before 500. Levita's arguments in favor of this later date of the introduction of vowel-points gave rise to considerable discussions and controversies, the most noted of which is that between Capellus and the Buxtorfs.

Abraham Firkovich (1786–1874) claimed to have discovered documents proving the invention of Hebrew vocalization to be of Karaitic origin. This contention has been disproved by scholars as have most of the other "discoveries" of Firkovich which aim at enhancing the prestige of the Karaites.

Simhah Pinsker (1801–1864) wrote a work entitled "Mebo el ha-Nikkud ha-Ashuri weha-Babli" (Vienna, 1863), which contains the results of his examinations of the manuscripts having the Babylonian form of punctuation which were found in the Odessa library. [G]

<sup>1</sup> Luzzatto enlarges on this topic in his "Oheb Ger." and lays down this idea as a logical conclusion at which he had arrived: Since the return of the Babylonian exiles to Judea, the necessity for explaining the Pentateuch to the people at large, who habitually spoke Aramaic had been felt. To supply it, there occasionally arose Israelites well acquainted with the text, who prepared a translation of their own, or rather a paraphrase, which they recited from memory—as nothing, save the inspired volumes, was then allowed to be read from a manuscript. In the course of time, the several translations orally given, began to differ considerably, and the Roman proselyte, not accustomed to hear the same book variously rendered, conceived the thought of making an Aramaic version, which, agreeing with the teachings of his Rabbinical preceptors, might supersede all others for the purity of language and clearness of expressions it evinced. Having undertaken the task and completed it successfully, he asked on it the judgment of R. Eliezer



(Megillah 3a), R. Eliezer and R. Joshua gave it their authoritative sanction. In fact the most celebrated of our expositors make honorable mention of it, and all critics deem it of great weight in defining obscure terms in the sacred text.

And here let me offer a somewhat more detailed account of the character of that very celebrated paraphrase; of the nature of the modifications which the pious paraphrast permitted himself to make therein, and of the spirit pervading it altogether.

The great Maimonides in his "Moreh Nebuchim" remarks that the righteous proselyte sought mainly to avoid with every possible care what might bear the appearance of anthropomorphism. Though this is very true, nevertheless it does not account for all the instances in which Onkelos departs from the original. I have closely analyzed the Chaldaic paraphrase, and I think I may safely establish the following, as a leading principle in the undertaking of our translator.

He would remove each expression which might in the least, scandalize the people for whom he destined his version, or even startle the heathen who might happen to hear it in the houses of prayer, where it was publicly read. From that principle emanate all the numerous discrepancies between the Chaldaic rendering and the Hebrew text; which discrepancies I divide into four classes, viz:

1. Altering the text while retaining the sense.
2. Altering both the text and the sense.
3. Adding to the text while retaining the sense.
4. Adding to the text and altering the sense.

I have then subdivided such classes into various kinds, amounting to thirty-two.<sup>1</sup>

and R. Joshua—two of the most renowned scholars of R. Johanan ben Zaccai. Their approval set thereon a sacred seal in the estimation of the multitudes, hence from that hour only Onkelos' translation was learned by rote and rehearsed at public convocations, but not till after the lapse of centuries was it committed to writing.—(Translator).

<sup>1</sup> Luzzatto alludes to his learned work, 'Oheb Ger,'—(Translator.

I will now offer an outline of what belongs to the first class only.

In translating the words "Walk before me" into "Worship me," Onkelos adhered to that which is more congenial to the Aramaic language. He rendered "other gods" into "people's false notions," to exclude the idea of the existence of any deity besides the Almighty. The phrase "The Lord smelt the sweet savor," he changed into "He accepted the offering," as the latter sounded more proper, when applied to the incorporeal God. Instead of retaining the interrogative form in the intercession of Abraham for the inhabitants of Sodom, he gave it a positive meaning, and said, "Surely, the Judge of all the earth will do justice." Out of respect for the Hebrew nation, he did not write, "It was told to the king of Egypt that the people had fled," but "that the people had gone." To render the sentence more intelligible, he made Joseph say, "I am addressing you in your own language," and not "my mouth is speaking to you."

To dignify the diction and at the same time explain it, he preferred to translate "bemakli," *all alone*, and not as it reads literally "*with my staff* I passed over this Jordan." A similar thought induced him to change the expression in the case of the erection of the sanctuary; for, where it is written "He (Moses) set up the laver. . . . and put in it water to wash;" Onkelos wrote, "water for holy purposes." And in deference to the oral traditions, he translated, "Ye shall reckon . . . from the morrow of the *holiday*," and not "from the morrow of the Sabbath," as in the original.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One of the points about which the Rabbinites and Karaites are most decidedly at variance, is that which relates to the celebration of Pentecost. The Rabbinites, who begin to reckon 50 days from the 16th of Nisan, take the word 'Sabbath' in the text in the sense of *holy day* and explain it so: 'Ye shall count unto you from the morrow of the holyday from the day that ye shall bring the 'Omer of the wave-offering, seven complete weeks.' So has Leeser translated, agreeably to tradition, and so have all orthodox expositors presented the sentence. The Karaites on the contrary, insist that the word 'Sabbath' in the text must not be construed otherwise than as generally: hence, they commence to number the 'Omer on the Sunday following the second day of Passover, and hold

What I have concisely brought forth as an evidence of the spirit pervading the celebrated paraphrase, must expose to view the faults of several commentators, who causelessly censured Onkelos as having exceeded his bounds, or who equally without any cause for it, would stretch the sacred text, to make it exactly fit the Chaldaic version.

A main feature also in Biblical hermeneutics is the observance of the rules governing the language; that is, the grammar. This may be divided into two parts. The first principally belongs to punctuations, distinguishing the varying value of the different vowel-points; the occasional interchange of one with the other; the nature of the Dagesh and Raphe; the principal cantillation signs which affect a separation and produce various pauses, and the subordinate or secondary.<sup>1</sup> All this depends therefore on the authority assigned to the punctuators; and it generally constitutes the kind of grammar taught at the schools, and treated by the greatest number of authors in their works. It has been called "grammatical science." We find no trace of it in the Talmudic age, because the vowel points had not then been invented.

The second part is intimately connected with the Hebrew language, regardless of the system of punctuation. It explains the power of servile letters, and that of different

the "feast of weeks" always on the day after the seventh Sunday. However, that 'Sabbath' has been used in the Bible to signify also 'holiday,' or rather according to its primitive definition, 'cessation from labor,' admits of no doubt. Thus, for instance, every revolving seventh year was called 'Sabbatical,' not because it had all the rigidity of the Sabbath, but because no Israelite dared work the ground during that period. Consequently, the Rabbinites may rest their tradition on Scriptural authority. In this case, I have been compelled to deviate from the method pursued by the author. I have briefly produced his ideas, in English, wherever he quoted largely in Hebrew. They who possess the 'Introduction' are referred to pages 35 and 36.—(Translator).

<sup>1</sup> Formerly a dash on the top of the letter signified that the Dagesh was omitted, and that the letter must be given a soft sound. The practice has now fallen into disuse. The cantillation marks have been divided into 'Melachim,' Rulers, and 'Mesharetim,' Attendants.—(Translator).

verbs; it institutes an inquiry into various forms and tenses, and into the specific effect of the several conjugations; it teaches the rules of syntax, whether applied to simple or lofty diction, examines tropes, and all rhetorical and poetical expressions; defines synonyms and the precise meaning of every word. This part of the grammar is called "Linguistics." It occupies the background in ordinary books purporting to give instruction in the sacred tongue. It is brought somewhat more forward, but not enough, in the commentaries to the inspired books and in lexicons. The science of which I speak was not neglected by the sages of the Talmud, as a question raised in the very first page of that work shows. Alluding to the time at which a priest, who had defiled himself by touching some impure object, could be considered again pure, and qualified to partake of consecrated food, a grammatical discussion is entered into with the view of determining whether the word *Taher* in the text is to be taken in a positive sense, signifying "he is clean," or imperatively, meaning "let him be cleansed."

The knowledge of the first part, namely, "grammatical science," is needful, for it proves of efficient help to sacred exegesis, giving us an insight into the thoughts animating the punctuators, and very often into ancient traditions. But the second, or "Linguistics," is the essential point on which Biblical hermeneutics principally rests. Among those who have lightly touched upon so superior a branch of our grammar, we may name, as deserving of distinction, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Mendelssohn and Wessely,<sup>1</sup> and as successors to

<sup>1</sup> It would be altogether superfluous to tell general readers who were Rashi, Ibn Ezra (or Abenesdra as the Italians call him) and Mendelssohn. The names are household words in Israel. Not so Wessely and the other eminent scholars of whom Luzzatto speaks. And yet the name of Wessely, or rather Hertz Wezel, or Wessel ought to be embalmed in the memory of all who admire bright talents, profound erudition and withal enlarged ideas and sterling piety; for, these qualities and gifts were the possessions of the author of 'The Songs of Glory,' (Shire Tiferet). As by this sublime work he endeavored to rekindle the sacred flame of Hebrew poetry, so by the rest of his numerous productions he sought to awaken a new spirit among his contemporaries and co-religionists, to-



the last two, the modern authors of "Minhah Hadashah"<sup>1</sup> and of the "Measseph," besides some of the ancients whose writings have been lost, for instance, Rabbenu Saadya, R. Moses Cohen, R. Jonah ibn Janach, and others mentioned by Ibn Ezra in his "Sepher Mozenayim."

Worthy of special mention is the Ephodi,—viz. Porfiat Duran, who, in his inedited and very rare "Maase Ephod"

wards the middle of the eighteenth century. He would stir them up to the exigencies of the time, that by joining secular learning to Talmudical studies they might elevate their social standing. What trials did he not endure in his efforts to accomplish this noble purpose? (Translator).

<sup>1</sup>"Minhah Hadashah" is the name given to an edition of the Bible, with German translation and a brief Hebrew commentary, by different authors, edited by Meir Obnornik, Vienna, 1792–1806, in 15 volumes. The "Messaeph" is the name of a Hebrew magazine, to which Mendelssohn and Wessely largely contributed. The writings of Saadya Gaon, chief of the Academy of Sora towards the end of the tenth century, with the exception of his famous philosophical treatise "Sepher Emunot we-De'ot," and an Arabic translation of the Pentateuch and of several books of the Bible, which have been edited by Joseph Derenbourg, and provided by him with a French translation and notes, have unfortunately been lost. [A complete list of Saadya's edited and unedited works will be found in Malter's "Saadia Gaon, His Life and Works." G.] The same fate, I think, was shared by the commentaries of Moses Cohen. [R. Moses ha-Kohen ibn Gikatilia was a Hebrew Grammarian and Bible exegete, living in Spain in the latter part of the eleventh century. He was the first Jewish exegete to give a historical interpretation to the prophecies of Isaiah and to give rational explanations to some of the miracles of the Bible. His commentaries have not been preserved, except in quotations by other commentators. The late Dr. S. Poznanski collected the comments of Gikatilia, found especially in the commentary of Ibn Ezra, in his work "Moses ben Samuel ha-Kohen ibn Chiquitilla, nebst den Fragmenten seiner Schriften," Leipzig, 1895, G.] Ibn Janach's "Sefer ha-Rikmah" has happily been rescued from the sea of oblivion and published in 1855, together with some annotations by Luzzatto. [This formed the first, grammatical, part of his great work, of which the Arabic original was published by Joseph Derenbourg in association with W. Bacher, Paris, 1886. The second, lexicographical, part of his work was published in the Arabic original by Neubauer, Oxford, 1875, and in the Hebrew translation of Judah ibn Tibbon, under the title "Sepher ha-Shorashim," by W. Bacher, Berlin, 1897, G.]—(Translator)



treated this subject more methodically and extensively than all his predecessors. He wrote in the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Of Saadya we have the Arabic version of the five books of Moses, printed at Constantinople in Hebrew characters; then, again, with Arabic letters in Polyglot Bibles. All critics set a high value on it, and even the Samaritans adopted it for a time. At present they use the translation with which Aba Said furnished them, because made after the Samaritan text.

The third principle in Biblical hermeneutics is that which stands at the basis of every human operation: it is reason rightly used. I will note down the errors (antagonistic to reason) into which people are now apt to fall regarding sacred exegesis.

First of all, he acts very unreasonably who will not go a step beyond the plain meaning of words, and this is the mistake which the Karaites make;<sup>2</sup> for, aside from the traditions, it often happens in books of every kind, and more so in the holy volumes, that the apparent signification of certain terms, is not the real sense they intend to convey. Nor does a meaning cease to be true and literal, because it is the result of deep reflection, or even of long discussions on the context.

<sup>1</sup> The Ephodi I have seen often cited. Reggio numbers him among the Rabbis opposed to the study of philosophy. His family name was Duran. His first name has been differently spelt: Prophot, Priphot, Prephot. He is mostly known as 'the Ephodi,' (the word consisting of the initial letters: אֶמֶר פְּרִיפּוֹט דּוּרָאן, viz "Says Priphot Duran"), possibly because Hebrew authors are not infrequently styled after a work which brought them into note. So is Eliyahu the Levite called 'Bahur,' on account of a famous production of his pen.—(Translator.) [His real name was Isaac b. Moses ha-Levi, Profiat Duran. He lived in the south of France during the latter part of the fourteenth and the early part of the fifteenth centuries. During the persecutions of 1391, he was forced to embrace Christianity, but later returned to Judaism. He is the author of several controversial works against Christianity. His greatest work, "Ma'aseh Efod", a critical Hebrew grammar, to which Luzzatto refers, was published in Vienna, 1865. [G]]

<sup>2</sup> Illustrations of this assertion may be the following: The Karaites deem it imperative to eat Mazzot every day during Passover, while the

He who should hold that nothing is needed to acquire a thorough familiarity with the Divine legislation, save the knowledge of each word separately, would be laboring under a very wrong impression. In fact, we hear the Psalmist, in the golden age of the Hebrew language that is, when the value of each term could not have been ambiguous and uncertain, repeatedly beseech the Lord, for an intelligence capable of seizing upon the right import of the Scriptures, and among thousands of entreaties of that character exclaiming, "Oh! uncover my eyes, that I may behold wonders out of Thy law."

Now, for example, the intercalating of the thirteenth month of which the sacred text does not make any mention, is nevertheless positively embodied in the law itself. For it sets the Passover fixedly at a solar period, namely, the "Hodesh Abib" (Spring). And yet the festival is demonstrably connected also with lunar changes. It must be at full-moon. The noun "Hodesh" can only refer to the moon which has a renewal of phases, while the sun (causing "Abib," or the ripening of grain) cannot be said to have months except in a conventional way, as civilly agreed upon. Hence flows the implicit commandment of combining in one year the lunar with the solar cycle.

So also touching the expression "eye for eye," and others of a similar nature. The law seems to impose the *lex talionis*; still, when it prescribes elsewhere "Ye shall not take a ransom for the person of a murderer," it sufficiently shows that in cases not involving homicide, a pecuniary fine or penalty was admissible. The corporal punishment threatened may have been intended as a check on the opulent, apt to give rein to acts of violence, though it was left Rabbinites understand the command, "Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread," as forbidding leaven and not as a law demanding absolutely that we shall make our meals with unfermented bread. So, likewise, the Karaites prohibit to themselves any fish that has not scales visible to the naked eye, though it may be known that it drops them in the water. The Rabbinites consider the ordinance "all that have not fins and scales. . . ye shall not eat." as excluding only those fishes deprived of scales altogether.—(Translator).

to the discretion of the tribunals, or rather of the Supreme Court to decide in special cases.

It may, therefore, be established that the genuine and real sense of the Scriptures is not always that which appears the most literal, but, on the contrary, that the literal is at times false and wrong. Any person reading this sentence as it stands in the original, "I will make thy seed like the dust of the earth, that if a man shall be able to number the dust of the earth, even thy seed shall be numbered," may imagine that the meaning is a positive one, whereas it is only negative, and it signifies that as none can reckon the particles of the earth, so it would be impossible to count all the descendants of Abraham. Here, then, and in like instances, a double sense is perceptible; a literal, or rather a superficial and apparent, and another which is formal and actual. They do not at all differ from each other, they are precisely identical, but we cannot arrive thereat without first tearing the veil that covers the true signification.

Again: he would act against reason, who should strive to find in the sacred code things which God did not purpose to teach us. The law was destined to give light regarding duties, and not about the secrets of nature. Thus our many philosophising doctors went astray, when they arbitrarily attached to Holy Writ philosophic notions prevailing in their time; when, for example, they found in the first sentences of Genesis, the four elements of Aristotle, besides matter and form, represented by the expression "Tohu Vabohu."<sup>1</sup> With the pious intention of serving the cause of religion by proving that it agreed with the leading philosophy of the time, they might have injured it, if truth could ever be injured. For, as in later ages, the

<sup>1</sup> Maimonides, in his *Moreh Nebuchim* speaks at some length on this topic, and Gersonides, in his *Milhamot Hashem*, follows in the wake of the great Cordovan Sage. He tries to draw the ancient Rabbis to his side in this explanation. Tohu, like Tav, means a mark, viz., a form, and Bohu is a compound word, Bo-Hu, viz., In-It (there is a matter). After all, other men can be met besides the despised Talmudical casuists, who strain the sense of words to make them suit their fanciful theories.—(Translator).

vanity of scholastic philosophy was exposed, it would have been a logical sequence that the holy books with which its doctrines had been connected, should, like them, have fallen into discredit. This circumstance shows that great circumspection ought to be exercised in applying to the sacred pages philosophical or scientific notions, which may, at times, be erroneous, and respecting which it is not the office of religion to offer us tuition.

He is guilty of presumption, who labors hard to twist the meaning of such passages, as present to him ideas which do not tally with his own, though they be not in themselves repugnant to reason and absurd. This fault they commit who apply an allegorical sense to the narrative of the sin of our first parents, notwithstanding that it has nothing in it metaphysically impossible.<sup>1</sup> It is a grievous fault, because they dare pronounce a judgment on the Divine will, as if the Supreme Being could not wish that to which our reason objects. What could be said of the physicist who denies the power of the magnet, or the astounding properties of the electric eel of South America, because such phenomena are inexplicable to human understanding? That a thing has been very clearly expressed in the sacred text, without implying self-contradiction, ought to be quite enough to induce us submissively to accept it, not waiting to do so, till our reason is fully satisfied therewith; our reason, so unapproachably distant from that of the Supreme Lord, as Isaiah (lv.9) tells it: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts higher than your thoughts."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Almost all commentators of the Spanish school, and some of the Italians also, have given the transaction related about Eve and the Serpent a figurative signification. Maimonides, in the second chapter of the first part of his *Moreh*, in answer to a sensible question put to him, displayed admirable sagacity in expounding that most perplexing of all Biblical chapters, and I think he has, partly at least, succeeded in explaining away the idea that man's first disobedience was rewarded with the gift of knowledge.—(Translator).

<sup>2</sup> With the most profound respect for Luzzatto, the passage chosen can scarcely be applied to the question at issue. Who will dare to say



Furthermore: Two different modes of proceeding in our Biblical researches must be distinguished from one another. The first is to endeavor to discover the exact meaning, the second to give it a plausible reason. The former must, by all means, have the precedence, for it is our bounden duty to comprehend the written word. The latter must hold a subordinate position, and be contented to receive rule and direction from the other, because while this has a clear and distinct object—namely our performance of the law, through our comprehension of its precepts—that looks for an aim which may not be reached. In matters of a divine origin, to know the why and wherefore is not absolutely necessary, and not infrequently it is impossible to fathom the intent of the heavenly legislator. He who would assume to discover the motive for every thing recounted in the sacred code, would stop short in its very first page. The creation is perforce, and will ever remain, inexplicable to human reason. Man must accept the dogma, that all has emanated from a Supreme Intelligence, under penalty of stooping to receive a dogma still more inconceivable, nay, absurd, that is, the eternal and fortuitous existence of all that we know as creatin.

The same may be said with regard to the order followed by the inspired writer in the narrative, and likewise touching the frequent repetitions he made. To assign a reason for all of that, is praiseworthy, whenever it can be accomplished without distorting the genuine sense of the text; but it is not indispensable, nor can human intelligence always succeed in the attempt. The best plan suggested to the mind would be to let such peculiarities go unexplained rather than allege motives affording little satisfaction, or

that all the Creator does should be put into the crucible of human understanding, and tried whether it accords with our faulty standard! But inasmuch as the Pentateuch is a book granted to the House of Israel for their guide through life, it should be, as far as possible, explained in a manner acceptable to reason. Thus might the observance of its sacred contents be with greater facility secured.—(Translator).



leaving us in a state of uncertainty.<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, he deviates from the straight path who attempts, in Biblical hermeneutics, to explain expressions apart from the context. He verily abuses the divine word, for it is obviously manifest that a passage broken and mutilated can be made to give a sense altogether contrary to what it conveys in its entirety, nor is there any error or absurdity which by such a process may not find support in Holy Writ.<sup>2</sup>

And here it is proper to draw a distinction. For, if he who explains the various portions of the same subject separately, or the several sentences depending on each other and strictly joined together, singly, commits an error; so likewise does he who would connect with each other

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Arama and Isaac Abarbanel, who follow the same system in their commentaries, endeavor to account for those peculiarities, and in so doing they exhibit a vast deal of ability. But the dictum of the Rabbis, "En mukdam umeuhar battorah," is borne out in several instances. So, for example, we must of necessity admit that the chapter which tells us of the marriage of Judah, and the birth of his sons and their marriage, belongs to an earlier period, since we see his grandchildren among the seventy persons who emigrated to Egypt. That chapter was not chronologically put in the right place, because the sacred historian chose to give us first some information of greater importance, as the selling of Joseph to the Ishmaelites really proved to be. About repetitions many have, undoubtedly, an aim discernible to the thinking mind, but the motive of a number of them cannot well be ascertained.—(Translator).

<sup>2</sup> Such is the method resorted to by the authors of the four gospels, in their anxiety to propound unreasonable theories. All the quotations from the olden Scriptures are but fragments of single sentences or paragraphs. They are so clumsily put together that a mere tyro in Biblical studies will detect the inappropriateness of their application. But some, more than others, offend common sense. Thus, where Hosea contrasting the goodness of God with our national dereliction from duty, says: "When Israel was young I loved him, and I called my son out of Egypt," (xi. 1) the New Testament takes the second half of the sentence and asserts that it alludes to an incident related there to have happened during the infancy of the founder of Christianity. So also the touching description, by our plaintive Bard, of Rachel, weeping over her children in exile and the joyous promise given her of their return from captivity, is garbled and made to predict the doubtful event of Herod's

passages that happen to be in close proximity, but which are totally different in their sense and character.

In fact, in the preceptive part of the sacred code we see many laws, which do not have the slightest connection, follow one another. It could not indeed have been otherwise, since the holy books contain multifarious rules. It is then very clear that when two ordinances, dissimilar in their nature and aim, come close upon one another in the original, they should not be regarded as mutually dependent, but altogether distinct and isolated. To assign a motive for their proximity is, as stated above, a praiseworthy effort, but not obligatory on our part. Nay, sometimes it is beyond human ability, and even dangerous to do so, for such researches might suggest crooked and false interpretations, inducing us to exhibit laws in a light not given them by the legislator, while endeavoring forcibly to render analogical, what is obviously distinct.<sup>1</sup>

cruelty against the male children of Bethlehem. Sometimes the plan is more ingenuous in distorting the original text as in the case of Jesus having escaped to Capernaum (Kephrah Nahum) on account of the arrest of John, called the Baptist. One part of a verse from Isaiah, in a mutilated condition, is hooked to the following verse—which begins a new subject,—and to show the glory that the presence of the son of Mary shed upon the place where he dwelt, we are presented with the following misquotation, “The land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light, and to them that sat in the region of death light is sprung up.” (Isaiah viii. 23; ix. 1). Instantances might easily be multiplied by scores, but the above will suffice to illustrate how through such a method anything can be proved, just as Luzzatto writes, and as long before our time, Maimonides said to the Jews of Aden in his letter, namely, that by using a sentence separated from the preceding and the succeeding, as an argument corroborative of one’s position, it may even be shown that Holy Writ sanctions the worship of idols.—(Translator).

<sup>1</sup> Don Isaac Abarbanel (or Abrabanel, as he is also called), a strong advocate of the system of finding always a reason for the proximity of different Biblical rules, labors hard in his commentaries to succeed, but really his ingenuity is often abortive. The reasons he, at times, alleges are so far-fetched that they cannot elicit approval. To cite a single example: he would make us believe that the prohibition of cursing rulers of the nation is next in the original to that of taking usury, be-

Whenever, therefore, we perceive that the sages of the Talmud establish a certain enactment, seemingly derived from such a proximity of the sacred texts, or as they term it *Semuchin*, that enactment must infallibly have its origin in oral traditions, and the proof resting on the Pentateuch is a mere "Asmachta" (a faint support to aid the memory). We know, besides, that the system of predicating a rule on such a support is not always admitted; for, we read in treatise Yebamot that R. Judah restricted it to matters relative to the Book of Deuteronomy.<sup>1</sup>

Not so, however, with the historical part of the revealed books, because all the sections of the same narrative must mutually borrow light, and be considered as integrally joined in one. Nor is this all, where it happens that the identical occurrence is repeated in various places, what has been stated here, may be further explained there, agreeably to the Talmudic adage. "The words of the law are poor (brief) in one case, and rich (diffuse) in another."<sup>2</sup>

cause people will be apt to let their tongues loose against the judges who enforce laws affecting prejudicially their material gain. Being then unable to find some relation between that and the ordinance of not delaying to pay the tithes, which follows it immediately, he goes in a circuitous way and tells us that it is connected with a precept before it, teaching that in dealing with God we should not act as towards our fellow men; that while we must be patient with the latter and wait till they can repay what they have borrowed, we must be prompt in discharging our duties toward the Lord. All that waste of words could have been saved by stating the fact that the Mosaic legislation purposed, in a distinct ordinance, to lay down the broad principle of obedience to constituted authorities.—(Translator).

<sup>1</sup> For instance, "Thou shalt not wear a garment of "Sha'atnez," that is, of wool and linen together. "Thou shalt make for thyself fringes upon the four corners of thy vesture, wherewith thou coverest thyself." (Deut. xxii., 11, 12). The Talmudists seeking some support to their teachings from the nearness of those two verses, reminded us that though ordinarily the mixing of wool and linen in the same dress is not allowable, in the case of a Talit, so called, the rule did not apply, so that Zizit not of the same material might be attached thereto.—(Translator).

<sup>2</sup> The very beginning of the inspired volumes shows this with regard to the creation of woman; for, while in the first chapter of Genesis

The same frequently happens in the legislative part, that is, a Divine behest is enunciated in various places, each of which serves to elucidate the other.<sup>1</sup>

To this must be added, that both the sections comprising the Divine Code, the historical and the preceptive, may occasionally receive further elucidation from the rest of the sacred books. For, notwithstanding that these do not possess legal authority, because no prophet after Moses was clothed with the power of promulgating new laws, or of offering new interpretations of those already enunciated, still they most assuredly present the oldest authentic traditions, existing in the days long gone by, even the ancient time at which they were collated. Therefore are they styled by the Talmudical sages "Dibre Kabbalah" (Traditions) and they are and ought, accordingly, to be looked upon as great authorities in unfolding the text of the Pentateuch, that is, whenever they do not gainsay it,<sup>2</sup> but tend on the

it is simply stated that God created a male and a female, in the second we find the origin of woman related more in detail. In the first, the sacred historian desired to tell cursorily that all emanated from a Supreme Maker, but that mankind stand the highest in the scale of beings; in the second, he wished to point out how the mother of the human race emanated from the man, whose companion she became with the view of impressing on the mind the sanctity of marriage, and of connubial ties.—(Translator).

<sup>1</sup> Thus on the eve of the deliverance from Egypt, Moses ordered that the firstlings of clean animals be offered, and each first-born of women be redeemed. This is repeated several times, but only in the eighteenth chapter of Numbers is it explained that the amount given for ransom must be five shekels.—(Translator).

<sup>2</sup> The Talmud records that some of the Rabbis would have favored the suppression of the Book of Ezekiel, because passages clashing with the Mosaic ordinances can be met therein. Where it says that an animal which died of itself, or which was torn by a wild beast, is prohibited to the priests, it raises the suspicion that other Israelites are allowed to partake of such unclean flesh. So where it forbids priests in general any woman save a virgin, or the widow of another priest, it stands in open antagonism to the ordinance of Leviticus. These passages and

contrary, to render its meaning clearer to the understanding.

others, relating to the sacrificial service, have, however, been explained in such manner as to remove the surprising contradiction.—(Translator).



## VIII. PHILOXENE LUZZATTO

Philoxene Luzzatto was born to a father whose name is a household word in the world of sacred literature. Nature lavishly reproduced in him paternal qualifications; and of that the son of the Jewish savant soon became aware. For, as each power of the intellect developed, it grew far-reaching; while memory retained all it could gather with unyielding tenacity. When thirteen years old, Philoxene drew towards him the eyes of eminent scholars. Padua, to which his family had migrated from Trieste, is an ancient city, famous for having been the native place of Livy, the Roman historian, and for possessing a university where students repair from all parts of Europe. In some of the cemeteries,<sup>1</sup> which doubtless date from a period anterior to the vulgar era, several inscriptions upon tombstones could not be deciphered. The Hebrew lad succeeded in reading what had baffled the understanding of men, who gave the city itself the epithet of the "the learned." Praises were bestowed without stint. Young Luzzatto heard himself then acknowledged a genius, by individuals well fitted to pass judgment. But, then, he was also faced by an appalling danger,—self-admiration, siren-like singing one's faculties into a sleep which knows no waking. Did he see the peril? If he perceived it, he threw down the gauntlet in open defiance, for, any feeling save the noblest, was repelled by his nature. It would have been impossible for a lad, who, before fifteen, had mastered Italian and Latin, Greek and Sanscrit, Hebrew and Syriac, French, German

<sup>1</sup> From a private correspondence with Dr. Isaiah Luzzatto, the writer has learned, that his brother, though extremely near-sighted, did not spare his eyes, while in the pursuit of a favorite study. His devotion to it in the present instance, was rewarded with the deciphering of ninety-five very old inscriptions at Padua and other Italian cities, and with some more, in later years, at Paris. To that literary success, Hebrew, German and French journals alluded in laudatory terms.

and English, not to feel that the regions of his intellect were extraordinarily wide, but he still deemed them unequal to his ardent aspirations. Hand in hand would he labor with his illustrious father in unearthing treasures lying deep in the mines of antiquity.

A controversy had arisen among several of the greatest of modern Jewish critics, about the country and age of Kalir,—a rhythmical writer, whose effusions have been admitted mainly in the Ashkenaz (German-Polish) ritual. Young Philoxene intently followed the discussion. His father had made an issue with a redoubtable antagonist.<sup>1</sup> The son came to the rescue. A consummate acquaintance with ancient geography led him on. By the Euphrates, a city called Sippara existed, and to it the precocious boy pointed in support of S. D. Luzzatto's conjectures. He essayed to prove that Kalir was not, as alleged, an Italian of the tenth century, drawing his appellation from Cagliari, in Sardinia, but a Persian Jew of an earlier age, as attested by the words often appended to his name "of Kiriath Sepher," meaning, of the city of Sippara; the latter being analogous in sound to *Sepher*, and perhaps a derivative of the Hebrew term. It is not the intention of him who traces these lines, to argue whether the position taken is unassailable. He simply wishes to set to view the unfolding of a mind, brimful of promise, and to illustrate the industry of a lad, who was wont to say, "a sweet recompense will it be if I can prove myself the least useful in the field of Jewish literature."

This utterance emanating from sincerity soon found its practical application in a work short, but thorough. A Hebrew comment and a partial version in Italian of two chapters and a half of Ezekiel, which the elder Luzzatto appeared to have reserved as an especial task for his son, evinces, besides a rare familiarity with the languages employed, historical and linguistic researches scarcely inferior to those

<sup>1</sup> The profound critic and linguist, S. L. Rapoport, late Chief Rabbi at Prague..

which have won for his parent an imperishable fame. The prophet describes the magnificence of Tyre—then the mistress of the sea—the extent of her commerce with nations near and far; the rich variety of objects brought to her shores; the pride begotten by success, and the grievous fall under the all-conquering Babylon. Then follows another vivid picture of Egypt's grandeur and of her humiliation, when reduced to a state of vassalage by the irresistible Nebuchadnezzar. The exposition demanded a precision in the choice of terms, and such accuracy, in defining countries, their products, and their inhabitants, that had it not been marked out by one who never prevaricated, as the work of his first-born child, it might have been ascribed to a more experienced hand.

But if a shadow of suspicion had crossed anyone's mind, that Philoxene's learning loomed high because perched on that of the Titan of philological knowledge—the professor of Biblical Exegesis at the Padua college—it must have flitted away instantaneously; for, Italian journals devoted to science bore testimony to the originality of the genius of their youthful contributor.

The son of a polished writer, who reckoned among the productions of his prolific pen a history of the struggle which made America free; the son of Charles Botta, had explored the spot where Assyria once held her dread sway. On the eastern banks of the Tigris, at Khorsabad, he discovered a huge structure, in all the artistic elegance and finish with which it had issued from the chisel of the sculptor, perchance over forty centuries ago. The enthusiasm which the discovery created reached its height, when scientists heard that inscriptions in arrowheaded form covered the sides of the edifice. Young Luzzatto shared in that ecstatic excitement. From the 15th to the 20th year of his age, the study of Assyrian inscriptions became his fondest occupation. He felt inspired by the thought that he might read therein the language met in Daniel and Ezra—the Aramaic—a grand scion of the Semitic stock. Balked, were, however, the anticipations of the eager youth.

The conclusions to which he arrived after patient labors and deep reflection are presented in two volumes published at Padua in 1849 and 1850. The first<sup>1</sup> which purposes to serve as an introduction to another of much larger size, tells the reader that the language of cuneiform, or arrow-headed characters, discloses not a Semitic, but an Indo-European, or, as now called, Aryan descent.<sup>2</sup> It asserts with positiveness that while many are the instances where affinity with Sanscrit—in which the sacred books of the Hindoos and the Parsees were written—can be traced, comparatively few are those which reveal a clear identity with the Chaldaic, and its kindred tongues. The author does not deny that, according to the Mosaic account, *Ashur*, from whom Assyria derived its appellation, is of Semitic extraction; nor that some of the titles borne by Assyrian officers, as *Rabshake* and others, seemed to point also to a Semitic origin, but seeing that the manner of writing the language on the discovered monuments—from left to right—as well as its construction and etymology, agrees with the Sanscrit, he is led to differ from the French, German and English savants, who claim for it a Semitic lineage. Then with an array of amazing erudition, Luzzatto proceeds to analyze at some length, historical names in support of his theory. He holds as a firm opinion, founded on philological and ethnological researches of five years' duration, that the primitive inhabitants of the land by the Tigris, were Semitic, but that very early an incursion of foreign tribes, likely from Turkestan, wrought an entire change in the country. The invaders belonged to what is termed Indo-European races. Some tribes settled in Assyria, became rulers, and spread their language and beliefs, to the almost total exclusion of the tongue and practices of the aborigines. Others, journeyed further, passing over to Asia Minor, Then, crossing the Mediter-

<sup>1</sup> "Le Sanscritisme de la Langue Assyrienne" (Padua, 1849) and "Etudes sur les Inscriptions Assyriennes de Persopolis, Hamadan, Van, et Khorsabad" (Padua, 1850). [G]

<sup>2</sup> Aryans appears as the name denoting the Medes, Persians, and possibly, other tribes of antiquity.

ranean to Europe., transplanted into that continent their religious ideas, their manners and speech. This theory young Luzzatto works out more fully in the second volume, which he, again, divides into two parts. Taking for his text mainly the inscriptions on edifices found in Persepolis, he begins by defining the meaning of every word relative to a deity, to a king, or to a country; goes on critically explaining the whole contents by the aid of other inscriptions with which he had made himself acquainted, and concludes with an analysis of the cuneiform alphabets and the several variations of which they are capable.

The writer of this sketch must own his utter incompetency to pronounce an opinion on the scientific results of Philoxene Luzzatto's investigations. He leaves to adepts in archeology the task of ascertaining whether they can stand the full light of more recent researches. In perusing the two volumes of which a very faint outline has been drawn, amazement and admiration seized the mind. It could scarcely be admitted that those two volumes composed in a foreign language<sup>1</sup> and treating with masterly skill a subject which engaged the attention of the ripest scholars, had issued from one just budding into manhood. But that fact forced itself upon the mind when it was made to see how associations of Orientalists in Germany, Royal Academies in Italy, and the societies of Antiquaries in France, tendered to that prodigy of learning a seat of honor in their midst.

So far the Paduan lad had discussed subjects mostly interesting to archeologists. Two years later—when just of age—a production of special attractiveness to staunch Israelites, to Israelites who are proud of their glorious past, issued from the press of Paris, as the first fruit of his riper intellect.

In the group of figures standing forth boldly in the middle aisle of the historical structure of time, Hasdai

<sup>1</sup> Young Luzzatto preferred the French to the Italian and used it in most of his works, because generally understood by all the educated beyond his native land.



Ibn Shaprut looms majestic. Philoxene Luzzatto paid homage thereto, and led his readers with a sense of gratitude to the man who gave the first and strongest impetus to Jewish learning in the Iberian peninsula. For, the influence he wielded, as minister at the court of Abd-al-Rahman III, and of his highly-cultured successor Al-Hakem II,<sup>1</sup> was altogether cast into the scale of our national elevation. By it, the refining agencies of science and literature were set to work, and the revival of the Hebrew language riveted the bond of religious union.

The circumstance which raised Hasdai loftily, deserves to be here recalled as an exemplification of the advantages derived from knowledge. Constantine VII, the Emperor of Byzantium, shared the ill-will which the Caliph of Cordova entertained against the Caliph of Bagdad. Fearing the latter, and wishing to draw closer in friendship to the former, the Byzantine ruler sent rich presents to Spain. Among other objects, there was a rare copy of the medical writings of Dioscorides. Being, however, in Greek, it needed a translation, and this—to be of practical use—demanded a complete understanding of the original, and of the Arabic into which it was to have been rendered. The only man able to do it thoroughly was the Jew, Hasdai ben Isaac. The performance of that task, brought the translator into note, and gained for him the power which he used to the noblest ends.

Formerly, Israelites turned Eastward for the light of instruction. From Babylon, or Persia, came the guidance to a religious path. But the all-knowing Providence, who prepares assistance, ere we, His creatures, become aware of its actual want, supplied the means by which those in the West might not be shrouded in mental darkness, when the sun of the East should go down. Thus, long before the schools of Sura and Pumbedita had closed, academies

<sup>1</sup> So eager was Al Hakem to extend his knowledge, that he ordered Joseph Satanas, or Shatnas, to furnish him with an Arabic translation of the Talmud.

had been successfully established in fair Andalusia. About the middle of the tenth century, a ship sailing from Bari—in lower Italy— was captured by pirates.<sup>1</sup> It had among its passengers, four Rabbis, who purposed journeying to the Orient, then the seat of learning. One of them by the name of Moses was ransomed by the Israelites of Cordova, and given some subordinate office at the Synagogue. On a certain occasion, as he listened in a corner of the college, adjoining to the house of worship, to the explanations of its chief—a Rabbi Nathan—respecting the number of immersions made by the high-priest on the Day of Atonement, he noticed a huge blunder. Rising quietly and drawing near to the teacher, he made use of a Talmudical phrase, intimating the mistake. The assembly, who had considered the Italian captive quite an ordinary person, astonished and pleased at the presence of so eminent a scholar in their midst, assailed him with questions, which he solved, greatly to their satisfaction. R. Nathan then, with a humility worthy of all admiration, declared that he would no longer act in the capacity of chief, when another, confessedly his superior, could officiate. R. Moses, and after his death, his son Hanoch, met in Hasdai an enthusiastic supporter of their endeavors to spread learning far and wide. That Maecenas of science determined to improve the fortunate incident, which emancipated the Jews of Spain from the tutelage of those in the East. Bent upon rendering Cordova the focus of learning, he procured books everywhere, and drew to himself—by the hope of the liberal patronage

<sup>1</sup> The story of the four Rabbis who were captured by pirates and later were the organizers of Talmudic learning in Europe and Northern Africa has been variously interpreted by historians. The usual version is that these were young men from the academy of Sura, who set out on a journey to collect funds for the support of the academy, which was then in an impoverished condition. They were captured while on their way from Bari. The incident happened about 945. This is the view taken by Graetz (*Geschichte der Juden*, vol. V, note 21, II), as against Rapoport, (whose opinion our author seems to have adopted), and has been followed by most historiographers since. (Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. III, p. 208.) [G]

he held out—the best talents of various countries. Young Luzzatto dwells with particular emphasis on the labors of two celebrities, who may rightly be called the first philologists in Hebrew literature.

For, Menahem Ben Saruk, or Sarug, of Tortosa and Dunash Ben Labrat, or Librat, of Morocco, throw a vast deal of light on the character and deeds of the champion of sacred learning, small as the remnant of their writings which the hand of time has not effaced, may be.<sup>1</sup> Our youthful chronicler, enamored with his subject, could not tell of the devotion of the Cordovan Hebrew to the cause whose noblest champion he became, without alluding to an episode most pleasing in his life. Hasdai's warm interest in whatever related to the state, political, social and moral, of his co-religionists, urged him to enter into a correspondence with Joseph, the Jewish king of the Chazars—a people of Asiatic Russia<sup>2</sup> by the Caspian Sea, who, about the eighth century, had accepted the faith of Abraham.

Men that deny any and everything of historical value, relating to Judaism, branded and condemned the letter of the Spanish grandee, and its answer, still preserved, as barefaced forgeries. Philoxene with his wonderful ability, demonstrates that the deepest, most conscientious and most patient investigations of modern critics, confirm what that correspondence states, in all its details.

The lovers of our religion cannot regret enough, that an aversion of our people to appear as if actuated by a spirit of proselytism, has been carried beyond all bounds, so that it degenerated into culpable neglect. For, it is really by

<sup>1</sup> A poem by each of these two distinguished scholars, who afterwards became open rivals, will be presented in an English garb, at the conclusion of this article.

<sup>2</sup> The Chazars are described by Graetz (*History of the Jews*, vol. III p. 138) as "a nation of Finnish origin, related to the Bulgars, Avars, Ugurs, or Hungarians, who had settled, after the dissolution of the empire of the Huns, on the frontier between Europe and Asia. They had founded a kingdom on the Volga at the place near which it runs into the Caspian Sea, in the neighborhood of Astrakhan, now the home of Kalmucks". [G]

reason of such neglect, that we have lost even those who voluntarily entered our fold. No effort was directed to learn what became of "the righteous proselytes," for whose welfare Israel's teachers taught us to pray daily.

Christianity that, with questionable justice, accused our fathers of compassing sea and land in quest of converts, has followed that very line of conduct, and robbed us of those who had, unsolicited, made common cause with the adherents of the truths of Sinai.

Our failure to retain our own, which every thinking Israelite must deprecate, was deemed by young Luzzatto an evil which he felt himself called upon partly to remedy. His soul overflowing with tenderest emotions early conceived the wish to carry to brethren far off the greetings of their more favored fellow-believers, and, together with the re-animating assurance of their kind remembrance, also their culture. In childhood he had read that where civilization had stopped short, there lived a vast number, who worshipped the one God. The Falashas, and their unflinching attachment to the Law they had accepted three centuries before the vulgar era, would often rise before the lad's thoughts. But how approach these brethren, and breathe into their hearts the encouragement they supremely needed? In the sixteenth year of his age, the son of the Padua professor, was informed that a French traveller M. D'Abbadie, had settled in Abyssinia. Immediately the study of the Ethiopian language engaged his attention with signal success. The bold student undertook through the same Frenchman, to enter into direct communication with the wonderful sect that for over twenty-two centuries had clung to the Unity, notwithstanding that millions of their countrymen willingly or forcibly, embraced the trinity; and though in utter ignorance of the existence of any human beings, besides themselves, were still attached to the olden faith. After a long suspense ample answers followed the anxious inquiries. The gratification was unbounded, but so was also the longing to gain a deeper insight into whatever concerned the tried adorers of the incorporeal and ever-living Saviour, in semi-

savage Africa.<sup>1</sup> A thirst for that knowledge, which might enable him the better to perform a contemplated mission, led Philoxene out of the parental roof. He travelled to Germany, consulted her world-noted scholars and ransacked her libraries; then proceeded to France, and where Munk the orientalist wrote, and Albert Cohn stood a sustaining pillar to Jewish students, every manuscript and printed volume, capable of swelling the store of his learning, was put within his reach. In Paris, his marvelous familiarity with languages—to which he had added the Arabic—unfolded before his eager mind treasures, which he made ready to subserve his philanthropic object. But alas! in that city death marked him out as its rich prize.

Seven months he bore excruciating pains, rather than relax in his endeavors. An operation brought relief, and he wrote home light-heartedly. His father should not grieve. The prince of Hebraists whose soul was mirrored in the soul of his Philoxene, should not yield the sweet hopes formed. His oldest son would live and majestically rise in the world of letters. But one morning the door of the humble home at Padua suddenly opens. "Father, dear father, I have come to ask your blessing, and die in your arms." The unhappy parent, terror-stricken at these words, looks, and in a face pale and wan, in sunken eyes, in wasted limbs, in quickened breathing, reads the approaching end.<sup>2</sup> From the bed of suffering, to which Philoxene took in his twenty-fourth year, he never rose again; yet when agonized

<sup>1</sup> A book of their prayers translated from Ethiopian into Hebrew, has been recently published under the auspices of the '*Alliance Israelite Universelle*,' and the London society of Hebrew Literature, by Joseph Halevi, who visited Abyssinia ten years ago. [Interest in the Falashas has of late been revived through the activities of Dr. Jacques Faitlovitch, who visited the tribe several times, since 1904, and succeeded in organizing committees in Europe and in America for the spread of education and culture in their midst, by which they might be preserved to the Jewish people. [G]]

<sup>2</sup> The description of that sad meeting is taken from a funeral oration, —a splendid tribute to the character and deeds of S. D. Luzzatto by M. Tedeschi, Chief Rabbi of Trieste.



at every pore, his thoughts still flew to the objects of his travels and researches. A few days before the spirit returned unto God who gave it, he dictated the last pages of his work on the Falashas,<sup>1</sup> the people for whom he yearned, and whom he had vowed to rescue from the pit of ignorance. The golden dream vanished like the radiance of the setting sun, but he who was urged on by it to the heights of knowledge, left a monument which will not pass away. Samuel David and Philoxene Luzzatto, "Loving and dear in life," to one another, "are not separated in their death." "Swifter than eagles, stronger than lions"—"in doing the will of our Father who is in heaven," they are both known by their mighty deeds. Both are embalmed in the memory of all that honor truth, and cherish the sacred heirloom of Israel—Hebrew Literature.

POEMS BY DUNASH BEN LABRAT AND MENHAHEM  
BEN SARUK

Prefatory Remarks.

The following two poetical compositions have never, so far as the translator knows, appeared in an English garb. He has learned in the course of his reading, that there exists a version in German, but as he is unacquainted with that language, he did not try to procure it. Young Luzzatto, however, rendered into French—very literally, for reasons of his own—the portion of Ibn Labrat's poem relative to Hasdai, and the whole of Ben Saruk's.

The English translator preferred to consult the original, made known in part, first by the elder Luzzatto, in "Kerem Hemed," and afterwards entirely by Leopold Dukes, from

<sup>1</sup> This literary production, which suffices by itself to raise the author to the rank of modern savants, was printed seriatim in the course of three years in the *Archives Israelites*, at Paris, and from it in pamphlet form of 120 pages, 8 vo. The writer of this sketch hopes to offer to his English-speaking coreligionists, at no distant time, some specimens of young Luzzatto's account of much that relates to the Falashas. [This promise was fulfilled by Dr. Morais when he published an elaborate article on the Falashas in the Penn Monthly of Philadelphia. G]

a manuscript in Leyden, and reproduced by Philoxene at the end of his work, entitled "Notice Sur Abou-Jousouf Hasdai Ibn Shaprout."

This translation is freer in its diction, still the sense has been, so far as compatible with the genius of the English, faithfully retained. No attempt was made at versification, lest the meaning be sacrificed to rhyme. The text is metrical, every line divided into four parts, and each strophe ending with an identical Hebrew syllable.

*Dunash Ben Labrat, is one of the oldest writers—if not the first,—on Hebrew Grammar. This poem is an introduction to a book he dedicated to Hasdai Ben Isaac ibn Shaprout, the renowned statesman, scholar and philanthropist of the tenth century.*

O my mind! learn thou knowledge, discernment and  
prudence,

Watch the ways of sound judgment, attend to instruction.

Seek thou only the right, and despise what is froward,  
Lest thou be led astray, as the mind of the reckless.

Ponder well that thou answer all queries with clearness,  
Like pure gold from the crucible, free from alloy,

O my body! be watchful, rebuke thy desires,  
Lest the whirlwind of passion overpower the spirit.

Seek not for choice wines, grown more sweet with long  
storage;

From bright goblets of metal, do the haughty quaff  
them,

And delight in the sparkle of cup and of contents.

They feast upon dainties—to pleasure abandoned—

In fair gardens they sit, by purling streams encircled,

They exult in their vineyards, in fruit trees heavy laden  
With pomegranates, olives, dates, almonds delicious.

Envy these not; nor crave for their mansions so spacious

Or gay coaches to bear thee abroad; nor yet long for

Fragrant perfumes, exhaling the sweetest of odors,

Nor sigh for bright fountains, nor murmuring brooklets,

Where the fleet-deer, and roe-buck to quench their  
thirst hasten.

Ever limpid, ever flowing, they moisten the furrows,  
Where flowers will blossom, in hue and tint radiant.  
All of these things are fleeting, they cause but vexation,  
Mortal joy turns to weeping, earth's sweetness grows  
bitter.

The beginning is bliss, but the closing is anguish,  
And the hope of a life ends in sadness and wailing.  
Care thou not for the friendship of men worldly minded,  
For they sow but the wind, and they reap the storm-  
harvest.

Court not for companions, the prosperous wicked,  
Though this night they may revel, to-morrow they die;  
then,

Unwept and unmourned with the dust they commingle.  
Strive to walk with those mortals, God-loving, God-  
fearing,

With teachers of good, that direct the steps upwards.  
Give thanks to thy Maker, who gave to His creatures,  
A heart ever feeling, a soul never dying.

Him who raises the humble, who casts down the  
haughty,

Thank in rhymes, and in measures, smooth, flowing and  
graceful,

With songs that are new, and with verses well pondered.  
O sing in high praise of that Chief of the College,  
Who has smitten and vanquished the troops of the  
stranger.

Enrobed in his armor, of might and of glory,  
He conquered and captured ten fortified cities,  
And lopped off the branch bearing sharp thorns and  
thistles.

The son of<sup>1</sup> Radmir with his priests and his chieftains,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Young Luzzatto descants on this period, and explains that Hasdai having gone on a diplomatic mission to those sections of the peninsula held by the Christians, induced Don Sancho I, the ruler of the kingdom

A warrior and monarch, he brought as a suppliant,  
 Bowing down, bending low, before people he hated.  
 He drew also the Princess, grand-dame of the ruler,  
 Named Tota, the heedless, who governed the kingdom,  
 By the force of his wisdom, the power of his cunning.  
 Through his skilful adroitness, the charm of his language.  
 Nations quake, peoples fear, and the strong melt away.  
 Terrified step great kings from their tottering thrones.  
 With rarest gifts laden to Spain do they hasten,  
 Prostrating themselves at the feet of Hasdai.  
 Full of ire are the high, and the men wont to counsel,  
 For the mighty are fallen, they fret and they murmur.  
 But he conquers them all, by the strength of his  
 knowledge,

The wise and the simple bow alike to the will of  
 their master.

In the East and the West spreads the fame of his learning  
 With Esau joins Ishmael, uniting to praise him.<sup>1</sup>

On the good of his people his mind is bent ever,  
 He frustrates evil-schemers, and foes puts to flight.

A friend to the teacher,<sup>1</sup> overlooking shortcomings,  
 When sitting in judgment, he speaks softly and sweetly.

In him know the poor and the needy a father,

In him finds the poet a generous patron.

Far choicer than gold are the boons of his giving,

As pure as the onyx, as rare as the diamond.

Ever bounteous descend their perennial shower,

In the Winter they fall, in the Summer they cease not.

The students from him receive light and safe judgment,

To Sura his riches he sends for the purchase

Of rare books of learning, from which all may gather

of Leon, to come to Cordova, and be cured of an annoying disease, and thus led him to enter into a treaty advantageous to Abd-al-Rahman.

His grand-mother, a proud person, who having been regent for her infant son Don Garcia, king of Navarre, had acquired undue influence, accompanied him, and added greatly to the exaltation of the Caliph and his minister Hasdai.

<sup>1</sup> He refers of course, to the Christians of Asturias, in Northern Spain, always the irroncilable foes of the Moors.

The knowledge of holiness sweeter than honey,  
The tenets of verity, drawn from above.  
So seeing his zeal, and his love of pure righteousness,  
I, Dunash, his servant, the least of preceptors,  
Have written a book, that will cause one<sup>1</sup> to blush for  
The corruption of good, that his words have occasioned.  
To the noblest of princes in mercy and kindness,  
The first part of my work, will rehearse praises due.  
For his name with a brightness refulgent encircles  
My production, and raises it far above others.  
When the rhymes are completed that tell of his  
goodness,  
I shall enter a field, wide, untrodden before.

*Poem by Menahem Ben Saruk, Dedicated to Hasdai ibn  
Shaprout, and Intended to Refute the Aspersions of  
Ben Labrat.*

For the mighty in knowledge of laws we revere,  
For the great Prince of Judah, sing greetings, ye hills!  
Come all with rejoicing, from earth's furthest borders,  
From all her four corners make haste and draw near.  
Quick, make ready the ways, throw wide open the gates,  
That the faithful, the chieftain, may enter therein.  
His approach is as sweet as the breath of perfume,  
—Ever yielding fair grace to the tribe of Jeshurun—  
And all mouths ever smiling, cry gladly, "He comes."  
At his advent parched lands and lone forests sing loud,  
What is withered will bloom, and be laden with buds,  
When, amid songs of triumph, and shouts of rejoicing,  
The chief of the college to gladden us comes.  
When he turned his steps backwards to go far away,  
Heavens' orbs were enshrouded, their brightness was  
dimmed.  
The city most famous, engirdled with beauty,

<sup>1</sup> His literary rival, Menahem ben Saruk.



Sat low in his absence; its denizens mourned.  
The needy were desolate, the poor were forsaken,  
They saw not his face, ever beaming with kindness.  
Then the mighty oppressed us—a remnant of Judah—  
In his absence all Israel were treated as bondmen,  
The haughty grew fat, the exactors distressed us,  
Ill counsellors flourished, and foemen conspired  
To swallow our earnings, despoil and devour us.  
They wagged evil tongues, and they roared like the lion,  
Our protector had gone, and great awe seized our nation.  
And the dread and the fear fell on high and on lowly,  
For he had departed, who made the yoke easy.  
Through him we had dwelt in a strange land in safety,  
He had given us light and sustained our existence,  
Like a fair flowing stream, fresh and copious midst  
drought.

The people in chains he restored to enlargement,  
His soul yearned for them and with pity abounding,  
The rod of the task-master brake he in sunder,  
And hindred the cruel from vexing the helpless.  
The All merciful One in His infinite kindness,  
Sent him forth as a healer to those that remain;  
For the breath he exhales carries news of salvation,  
To the Lord's ancient freedmen, of liberty telling,  
It bears help to the poor, it brings hope to the hapless,  
Recalls to the mind the deliverance won  
When God rescued the slaves from the land of Mizraim,  
Brake the yoke of the Pharaohs, and carried His  
chosen,

Above and aloft, as on wings of the eagle.  
When He from the heaven sent blessed salvation,  
And graciously called Himself "God of the Hebrews,"  
Fled the nations before Him, their hosts wide He scattered.

With His hand He divided, and held as in bridle,  
Chafing and foaming, the Red Sea's giant billows.

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The God of all creatures has raised him a chieftain,  
To teach good instruction, enlighten the heedless,  
God gained for him grace in the sight of the ruler,  
Who lifted him higher than noble-born princes.

In his care the great mission entrusted did prosper.

His worth is held precious by Spain's lordly ruler,

As the offering made on the Day of Atonement.

Wherever he journeyed none dared to withstand him,

For the Lord, at his side, gave him courage and power.

He conquered with sweet words, with speech soft, per-  
suasive,

Without arrows or swords gained he cities and countries.

But a nation accursed, he drew forth from its hiding,

He brandished his steel and it vanquished the foeman.

He conquered the wizards, the dealers in magic,

He cut off the eaters of swine and unclean things

In diverse ways every opponent he humbled,

Who carried the shield, or who sped the keen arrow,

Who thrust with the lance, and who wore shining  
armor,

Who mounted swift horses—all vanished apace.

They melted like wax, they were scattered like sand-  
drifts,

Or hiding, lay sheltered in hollows of mountains.

On him whose renown grows, whose honor increases,

The noble-born wait, as the soil for the shower.

They open their mouths to drink in his wise sayings,

Which shame into silence the ideas they harbour.

Distrusting their knowledge, they ponder all mutely,

As blinded they grope in the light of his sunshine.

All eager they listen, his good deeds applauding,

From under his foot-steps the dust they would gather.

The flow of his eloquence charms many hearers,

Like the Urim of old, is his counsel considered.

The fruits of his lips, are as life to the spirit,

To the bones as the marrow, to flesh as full vigor,

Of those who are near, who dwell where he holds power;

For the light of his wisdom surpasses all teachers.

As for me I do know that thoughts wicked or foolish,  
Lodge not in his breast, neither guile in his bosom.  
For, truth is his portion, uprightness he values,  
A lie, though disguised will not merit his favor.  
Therefore am I urged to refute and prove groundless,  
The boast of the writer who seeks to confound me,  
And raise himself high above all commentators.  
Even the son of Labrat, who perverts what is rightful,  
Who fancies all learning is found in his sayings.  
Regardless, our most holy tongue he abuses,  
Our only heirloom, he makes vile in his purpose  
Of using in poetry strange rhymes and measures.  
Where the *Patah* he makes to accord with the *Kametz*,  
Where all runs pell-mell without proper direction.  
I bring cogent reasons, which sanction my statements,  
Let the wisest of mankind judge fairly between us.  
Oh! slight not my words; Oh! look kindly upon them,  
Evince thy benevolence, weigh well the question.  
Oh! listen my lord, lend thy ear, Don Hasdai,  
So may God answer thee in the hour of trial,  
And strive for thy cause, pleasing thus thy well-wishers,  
By making thy enemies—those who would harm thee—  
To vanish and scatter like smoke in the east wind.  
Prolonging thy days, never bearing misfortune,  
Blessing those who will bless thee, and cursing thy foes.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES





## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

ALATRI, ARTOM, MALVANO, MASSARINI.

Deserving of preeminence, because of a life unusually long and unswervingly devoted to the service of his people and his country, is the now lamented SAMUEL ALATRI.<sup>1</sup> When eighty-four years ago, he first opened his eyes in the gloomiest spot by the left banks of the Tiber, assigned as the dwelling-place of the outcasts of Judea, Popedom ruled inexorably. Samuel Alatri could not unfasten the iron bars which kept his brethren in enforced squalidness, but he bent all his energies upon holding the unjustly contemned above self-abasement.

Early chosen to represent the Hebrews in the Ghetto he cast about for a religious chief equal to the rising wants.<sup>2</sup> It was in the days of my youth that I saw this good man and indirectly heard of his project, according to which Rabbi Abraham B. Piperno—my revered teacher—should remove to Rome. The offer was declined, for to one so beloved by his scholars in comparatively free Leghorn, a larger emolument in “the eternal city” with its soul-cramping restrictions, could have no attraction. Under the Popes, the censor’s ubiquity penetrated even into the curriculum of Hebrew schools. Thus the Talmud, often burned by inquisitorial fanaticism, dared not be studied. Its very admission into Pontifical dominions was a penal offence, but Samuel Alatri—the Talmudical Jew—had access to the Vatican, and if any man could effect a modification of regu-

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Alatri was born at Rome in 1805 and died there May 20, 1889. [G]

<sup>2</sup> After the death of Rabbi Moise Sabbato Beer, who was Rabbi of the Jewish community of Rome from 1825 to 1835, Rome was without a Rabbi for a period of twelve years. The next Rabbi was Israel Moses Hazzan, a native of Smyrna, who was appointed to the office in 1847. Alatri delivered the principal address on the occasion of his induction, August 21, 1847. Hazzan occupied the office until 1853. [G]

lations bearing heavily on the dwellers of the Ghetto, that son of Israel could soften their rigor by dint of his acknowledged civic virtues and the wise dispensation of his wealth.

He was known as a liberal in politics and as loyal to the ancestral religion; he was known to have sung Hosannahs, when in 1848 the Nemesis of outraged humanity tore down the gates which had held five thousand of his brethren immured within horrid boundaries. His despatch in response to the congratulations of the never-to-be-forgotten Albert Cohn,<sup>1</sup> of Paris, on that stirring occasion, mirrored forth the whole depth of his feelings. Yet Pius IX—irreconcilable in his hatred against the anti-clerical—recognized Samuel Alatri's nobility of character and thought to praise our brother in faith greatly, when he said: "The Jew Alatri is the best in the municipal council at Rome."

I met my compatriot again in London in 1850,<sup>2</sup> after the reaction which placed his native city under French usurped authority. During a visit to the Roselli family—one of whose members was the famous Mrs. Sarah Roselli Nathan,<sup>3</sup> who consecrated her large means to the spread of Mazzinian views and works, and with whose relatives he was connected commercially and by consanguinity—that kind coreligionist of mine called at the Portuguese Orphan School, where I taught, to press my hand. He spoke of Benamozegh of Leghorn, whose scholarship was making a stir, and whom he wished to transfer to Rome.

What a golden chain of events during the thirty-nine years which have since elapsed! Papacy stripped of temporal power, looks a shadow of its former self. Italy, mock-

<sup>1</sup> Albert Cohn was born in Hungary in 1814 and died in Paris in 1877. He settled in Paris in 1846 and a few years later became the almoner of James de Rothschild and was thereafter closely associated with the many benefactions of the Paris Rothschilds. [G]

<sup>2</sup> From 1840 to 1865, Alatri made annual tours to foreign countries coming in close contact with the leading Jews in France and in England. [G]

<sup>3</sup> Sarah Roselli Nathan was the mother of Ernesto Nathan, subsequently Mayor of Rome. [G]

ingly called by Metternich "a geographical expression," is united under a constitutional government. The Jew of the Ghetto, fully vindicated, forgets past wrongs to work for his country's happiness, while the uncompromising Samuel Alatri, honored among the highest in the realm, heads the deputation which tells Victor Emanuel that Rome of 1870—the metropolis of resurrected Italy—has lifted up her gates to let her chosen king gloriously enter.<sup>1</sup>

But though seated in Parliament, and raising his voice in the hall of legislation to promote the common weal, Alatri never allowed his interest in his fellow-believers to lessen. When the weight of years compelled some relief to the burden, and he committed his onerous charge to his son Giacomo,<sup>2</sup> his ripe counsel was still sought after and reverently followed. The keen sorrow which the untimely loss of that illustrious son occasioned, soon bereaved Rome and Judaism in Italy of one about whom the English poet would have sung "his life was gentle, and the elements so mixed in him, that nature might stand up and say to all the world, 'this was a man.'"

More immediately active towards the creation of Italian unity than Samuel Alatri, was the Israelite, ISAAC ARTOM. Born in Asti—far famed as the native city of the immortal dramatic poet, Alfieri—our coreligionist has not yet reached the sixtieth year of his eventful life. He studied eagerly and learned much, when the religion he avows precluded any recognition of his sterling merits; when Catholics alone found the avenue to public preferment open. But the people's uprising of 1848 that wrenched the sceptre from enthroned despotism, supplied Artom with the lever of

<sup>1</sup> On October 2, 1870, Alatri was a member of a deputation that met King Victor Emanuel when he entered Rome and handed over to him the result of the plebiscite by which the inhabitants of the Papal territories declared in favor of annexation to the Kingdom of Italy. [G]

<sup>2</sup> Giacomo Alatri, for several years president of the Banca Romana and an authority on banking, directed his chief interest towards the establishment of kindergartens for the Jewish poor. He died at the age of fifty-six, two months before the death of his father. [G]

political elevation. He had attained just then his legal majority. Responding to patriotic impulses, he enlisted to fight the battles of Italian independence. His sentiments and the wide-embracing knowledge of men and things he displayed at a searching examination; his deep discernment when pleading at the bar, attracted the attention of the sharp-sighted Cavour. The Prime Minister of Victor Emanuel was devising a scheme which would astonish the world by reason of its boldness. He would make liberated Sardinia—so territorially small—enter into a league with England and France against Russia in the Crimean war. He hoped that the issue might do Italian valor justice, and secure the moral support of the Allied Powers in the projected revolution which would drive Austria from the peninsula. Cavour took Artom into his secret, and submitted to the sagacity of our fellow-religionist, plans of paramount importance.

To form a criterion of the opinion which the Premier entertained for his private secretary, one must read the diplomatist's rebuttal of an attack by a clerical paper. He wrote:

"That the *Armonia* aiming to strike me, should hurl its base insinuations against a distinguished youth in my employ, who is altogether adverse to political squabbles is what, I am certain, will provoke honest men of all parties. If the *Armonia* thinks to have made a great hit in publishing what according to its ideas, I meant to keep concealed, it is hugely mistaken. No circumstance in my political life affords me more satisfaction than that of having selected as my nearest and most effective co-workers in the discharge of extremely difficult affairs, first Mr. Constantino Nigra, then Mr. Isaac Artom, youths of different religions, but each possessed of a mind singularly precocious, of a zeal that does not waver, of a golden character. This public testimony which I feel in duty bound to offer on behalf of Mr. Artom, will assuredly be confirmed by all who know him and specially by his superiors, whose implicit confidence

he enjoys, not less than by his colleagues, who deservedly respect and appreciate his worth."

That Cavour's opinion was popularly shared, the suffrages which made Artom the first Senator<sup>1</sup> of the Hebrew faith in the United Kingdom of Italy, irrefutably showed. To him had previously been assigned missions in the fulfilment of which a singleness of purpose sustained by patriotism and furthered by broadness of views, was strikingly exhibited. From Paris, jointly with Count Arese, he brought to Italy the recognition of the French government. In Vienna, accompanied by General Menabrea, he drafted the negotiations which concluded the final peace with Austria. In Denmark he served his country as Minister Plenipotentiary. At Heidelberg he promoted the interests of public instruction with the presentation of broad ideas which challenged universal acclamation. As Secretary-General of Foreign Affairs, as a leading member at two International monetary conventions, in the field and in the cabinet, in royal courts and in municipal councils, Isaac Artom imparted dignity to all his acts. The pen which he discreetly handled while engaged in seeking the progress of his Italy, he learnedly wielded in editing and illustrating the writings of Cavour, and in translating from the German and annotating important works on political economy.

Artom's physical endurance never having corresponded to his mental vigor, induced too early a withdrawal from labors which he nobly promoted. He is now living in modest retirement, but not to luxuriate in the affluence he inherited. He bestows of his riches on what may improve his native city and his land, while Judaism, which he professes, does not invoke his personal and moral influence in vain. A child of pious parents, he remembers the covenant, and helps to maintain it and to defend its adherents.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Artom was elected Senator in 1877, after having served in a number of responsible diplomatic positions at home and in foreign lands. [G]

<sup>2</sup> He is well known as a writer of prose, especially on political subjects. His most ambitious work is a biography of his former chief



Of ISAAC PESARO MAUROGONATO,<sup>1</sup> Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies, working whilom shoulder to shoulder with Daniel Manin, to keep Austria at bay and preserve Venice to Italy; of Maurogonato, the Minister of Finance, in times needing abilities most surpassing; of Maurogonato, the model parliamentarian, the advocate of the rights of Jews to complete emancipation, the illustrious citizen and loyal Hebrew, a short biography can be found in "Eminent Israelites of the Nineteenth Century," by Henry S. Morais.<sup>2</sup>

BUT ALESSANDRO MALVANO must have here an honorable mention, however inadequate to his deserts, among the Italian Jews, to whom the classical peninsula points with pride. His exertions are unlimited in operations which immediately concern the economic condition of the country. To his wise direction of saving funds is due the prosperity of institutions so important and so useful. The comprehensive history of such institutions, traced by his pen, elicited the admiration of royal visitors at the Milan Exposition. As President of the Chamber of Commerce and Arts his unflagging energy upheld public credit in most critical times. His journeys, his meetings in the interest of Italy, his account of the results of profound studies in the line of finance, his sagacious provisions, have proved more than once a salvation most opportune and nationally beneficial. These facts king Humbert and his cabinet understood thoroughly, and therefore they entrusted that Israelite with functions which only the rarest talents can successfully

Cavour, which was written in collaboration with A. Blanc and is entitled "L'Oeuvre Parliaméntaire du Comte de Cavour". Artom died at Rome in 1900, at the age of 71. [G]

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Pesaro Maurogonato (1817-1892) was a very prominent figure in the Venetian revolution of 1848-49, after the close of which he had to leave the country. He later returned and in 1866 was elected a member of the chamber, after Venice became part of the kingdom of Italy. In 1890, King Humbert made him a senator. [G]

<sup>2</sup> In 1886 Maurogonato gave Venice—his native city—six thousand dollars as a nucleus towards the creation of a fund in aid of the defenders of Venice and of those who obtained medals for acts of bravery in the internal or external defence of Italy.

perform. The working classes also acknowledged his eagerness to study their improvement, and they repeatedly testified their appreciation of his endeavors and of his writings to that effect. By public confession there is scarcely an institution, looking to the betterment of the lowly, the untutored, or the unfortunate that could have dispensed with the activity of the Israelite Malvano.

When in 1881 he sat as deputy in the Italian Parliament and received the felicitations of his fellow religionists, he thus addressed the editor of the *Vessillo Israelitico* upon that topic:

“Among the very many tokens of love and esteem that are reaching me from every quarter by reason of the high office to which the kindness of the college of electors at Turin raised me, those of my co-religionists are brimful of notable meaning. Greatly more than marks of respect to my poor self, they are a homage due to liberty and justice, overcoming intolerance and prejudice. Your authoritative word, sir, confirms my thoughts. I do not know whether my powers will keep pace with my good intentions, but I do feel that very weighty and imperative have become the duties I owe society. I trust in God for the capacity to discharge them, and my religion—the target of electoral arrows, the cause of medieval imputations—will ever be a stronger incentive to make the name of Jew, which I bear, honored together with the name of Italian.”

After thirty years of indefatigable efforts, the fear that an exceptionally vast intelligence might raise the Israelite to a still loftier position in the government, suggested a sinister scheme. It was proposed that Malvano might serve his country beyond the sea. Why not make him an ambassador to Japan? But the Hebrew mind penetrated the object. He declined the foreign embassy. In Italy, and among those of his people who feel honored in his honor, that venerable co-religionist of ours will continue to live.

## TULLO MASSARANI—GRAZIADIO ASCOLI—DAVID LEVI.

A striking combination of varied learning and diplomacy is TULLO MASSARANI. Poetry and painting, eloquence of speech and linguistic culture have a devotee in the illustrious Israelite of Milan, whose voice resounds in the Italian Senate.

Casually opening a literary album which records the sentiments expressed by distinguished coreligionists in the peninsula, at the centenary birthday of Sir Moses Montefiore, I read on its initial page a graceful rendition of a Hebrew Psalm in Italian rhythm. It was Psalm cxii., wherein the inspired bard depicts the success which accompanies the righteous man step by step, as he steadily walks in the way of the Lord. The verses, in mellifluous language, flowed from the pen of Tullo Massarani. They cannot claim spontaneity, for in that instance it belongs to the author whom a heavenly afflatus stirred, but among the numerous effusions which zeal for the ancestral faith, or love of the land that made Israel free, drew from that gifted son of our race, the tribute which he sought to pay by his version, to the goodly English Baronet, best evinces a mind delicately refined. Massarani whose poetical vein runs freely, might have bid it trace original lines, but to the Scripture-reverencing patriarch, a scriptural ode was eminently fitting. The Italian delicately disclosed that thought and with it his appreciation of traits which ennoble human nature.<sup>1</sup>

And like his pen so does his pencil trace lines that reveal a heart open to the kindest emotions. At the Paris *Salon* a realistic picture attracts the visitor. It represents a handsome Cyprian slave, whom the jealousy of her mistress has condemned to death. Lonely upon a rock she sits, bending low. Her lovely head rests on her hand. The doves that she was wont tenderly to feed, drink in a silver basin the poisoned water which

<sup>1</sup> His translation of Heine's works in Italian and his essay on the great German poet, have made Heine popular in Italy. [G]

must end her own life. They shall not survive their gentle nurse. Who would care for them after she, who fondly tended them, has gone? That picture is the creation of Tullo Massarani. Another, emanating from his genius, and three more of a kindred character, form a group, which he has entitled "Woman's Odyssey."

Baron Alphonse de Rothschild of Paris, a patron of literature and art, wishing to honor the masterly abilities of the Italian Jew, had a work of Massarani on *Charles Blanc et son oeuvre*, issued at his own expense in a magnificent edition. The subject of that book had won celebrity as a leader in the fine arts at the capital of France, and Massarani illustrated Blanc's efforts commensurately to their worth. To that writing which a critic in the *Journal des Debats* praises without stint, the Italian has added two volumes upon French art.

But painting, which the Senator successfully cultivates and writes upon approvedly, does not engross all his mind. Familiar with foreign languages, he travels beyond the Appenines and the Alps in quest of information on letters and science, and when at home, he bestows the fruits of his researches on institutions, of which he is the patron and at which he lectures in choice diction. Because the Jewish diplomatist possesses an incisive style, a singular honor was conferred upon him. He headed with an epigram the document which the municipal authorities of Milan presented to Giuseppe Verdi when (after the opera *Otello* was rapturously received at the *La Scala* theatre), he was given the freedom of the city.

A friend of mine, replying to my inquiry, says: "Tullo Massarani owes the senatorial chair, which he becomingly fills, to a royal recognition of his vast acquirements in the domains of human knowledge." But to those who believe that the rarest endowments, and the fruition of social distinction, may be associated with sincere fidelity to the Divine Revelation; to those who value meekness as real nobleness, the assurance that the Israelite Massarani—though one of the select few decorated as *Cavaliere dell'*

*ordine del merito civile di Savoia*—identifies himself with the humblest among his people; that, while benefitting Italy by means of his talents and riches, he does his own brethren in Judaism also abundant good, must be gratifying in the extreme.

An Italian discussing a subject which interests him deeply may be taxed with partiality when he asserts that no Hebrew community had ever arisen at a bound, as it were, from lowliness to exaltation, as did that of Italy. Still, I feel certain that whoever has followed the current of events in the peninsula, since the days that seven states misgoverned by seven petty rulers, became a unit, will free me from the charge of national bias. He will have seen that force of character and intellect compelled that unprecedented quick change.

Without invidiousness, where illustrations are numerous, I may point to GRAZIADIO I. ASCOLI as a very bright evidence. The remarkable tokens of regard which king Humbert and foreign potentates have lavished upon him, are due to merits surpassingly great. That Hebrew was already a paragon of learning and high principles when the renowned S. D. Luzzatto dedicated to him his "Dialogue on the Kabbalah". Part of the first paragraph in the dedicatory address must be reproduced here. It is written in French and reads as follows:

"The rare union of eminent qualities of heart and mind; a vast and profound knowledge; a spirit of research, fathoming the most abstruse questions; talents for the liberal arts; acquaintance with the languages of most distant peoples; an intelligent activity brought to bear on the administration of extensive affairs and unweariedly directed to the progress of a religious congregation; this rare union of mental and moral qualifications, which at the age of twenty-two years has already secured to you the affection and admiration of every one who had the pleasure of knowing you, ... all of that, I say, would spur on the muses to vie with



each other in celebrating the auspicious day of your marriage."

Luzzatto rightly conceived, that to such an Israelite, the dedication of a learned work would signify personal esteem in a greater measure than would the customary nuptial song.<sup>1</sup> Who can tell but that the homage paid to virtue by the savant of Padua might have proved a further incentive to reach pre-eminence. Ascoli has become very great. Erudite Germany deemed it an honor to inscribe his name on the roll of members in her scientific academies. France could not find a man more worthy of the Volney prize for the best scientific work produced during the year,<sup>2</sup> than our fellow-believer at Milan. Ernest Renan said on the occasion: "The prize represents a becoming acknowledgment of a whole life, consecrated to profound investigations."

Its recipient enjoys yet unabated vigor, and new honors await him. Not long ago Milan celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his connection with its Royal University. Then, together with a gold medal bearing a touching inscription by his scholars, gifts from notable institutions at home and abroad poured in to the world-famous philologist.

I wish that I possessed the capacity to clothe in rhythmical English the splendid poem published at the time in the *Illustrazione Italiana*. The pen-painter pictures our Ascoli absorbed in lexical meditations environed by an aureole of light. At the rays it emits, hidden meanings flash athwart the thinker's understanding. Languages to which unintelligible words belong, assume a clear sound as spoken by peoples of antiquity, or by tribes beyond the confines of civilization. In like manner, as the astronomer

<sup>1</sup> At the age of 16, Ascoli created a sensation in the world of learning, by a comparative study of the Friulian dialect and the Wallachian tongue, which was regarded a masterly work in a field which had hardly been explored by philologists. [G]

<sup>2</sup> The Volney prize was awarded to Ascoli by the Institute of France for his great work "Lettere Glottologiche" (1881-86) which was later translated into German, as were most of his more important works. [G]

with his telescope unravels mysteries in the sky, so does the Jewish philosopher with his deep-searching acumen unfold recondite knowledge and he makes it tell the origin of nations and events buried in oblivion. Then the enthusiastic admirer thus addressess Ascoli: "Among so many weaklings, thou art a model of virile learning. Among many a pilfered, or fictitious fame, thine is a truthfully earned celebrity. . . . Resurrected Italy gives her son glory."

But Judaism also prides herself on the newly made Senator. The philological analyses which have immortalized his name, have largely been devoted to the service of Jewish history. Ancient epitaphs in Italy, where the oldest of our congregations, outside of Palestine, took root, his illumined vision discovered and deciphered. He pointed out their relative ages, and the relative culture of our brethren in those various ages. He enriched his expositions with a fulness of information which challenged the plaudits of orientalists in congress assembled. Entitled "Prince of Italian philologists," Ascoli is no more elated by that exalted epithet, than by the Senatorship which the country he honors by his writings has conferred upon him. Born in Gorizia—still a portion of "unredeemed Italy" (*Italia irredenta*)—he lives modestly in Milan, the city of his choice. There, one of my Leghorn friends who bears the same family name and claims some relationship, sought him out in 1881. Graziadio I. Ascoli—the master philologist—was found at the synagogue, joining his brethren in entreaties to Israel's God upon the Day of Atonement.<sup>1</sup>

A man of letters, a banker, a lawyer, and a member of Parliament is DAVID LEVI of Turin. His political opponents

<sup>1</sup> Moses Reines devotes the first chapter of his "Dor wa-Hachamav" (Cracow, 1890) to an estimate of the great philologist, which is accompanied by a picture of Ascoli. See also Jew. Ency., s. v. Ascoli died in 1907. [G]

said of him when elected Deputy: "As Levi is too much of a poet to suitably deal in bills of exchange, so he is too busy a barrister to do his legislative position justice." But despite all adverse criticism, he whom Garibaldi and Cavour highly esteemed arose to public favor.

Before Sardinia had proclaimed the emancipation of her Jewish subjects, David Levi had written some valuable memoirs on Hebrew education in Piedmont—that section of Italy which had given Judaism a Sabbato Graziadio Treves, the eminent Rabbi-Preacher, and a Lelio Della Torre, the colleague of Luzzatto in the once famous College of Padua. But a work that afforded Levi's versatility of genius the widest scope, is a drama entitled "The Prophet." It could issue only from a mind which education and surroundings made capable of conceiving Judaism in its loftiest spirituality. And the author of that sublime outpouring of the soul, drew inspiration from the purest source. For the charms of his mother's lovely face were surpassed by the grace of a moral nature which partook of the celestial. She was the virtuous woman of Holy Writ who speaks wisdom and in whose tongue is the law of kindness. Gently she led her sex in the way of mercy; her serenity dispelled gloom in the abode of misery. The son she cherished learned betimes to associate truth and humanity with the teaching of Sinai. In that blissful faith he grew, and "The Prophet," is the embodiment of his belief. Jeremiah, the plaintive bard of Israel's sorrows, figures there centrally, and around "the man who saw affliction" cluster characters typical of fervent zeal, of undying devotion to the apostleship of the Unity.

David Levi's controlling thoughts may be condensed in the following sentences which occur in a prose writing from his pen:

"A patriotic revolution breaks out and lo, the Jew intuitively hails it as the twilight of the dawn for which he has ceaselessly yearned....The Hebrew's triune creed is, God, Law, Humanity; and that same holy triad is the impelling force of great revolutions, which

whatever may be said to the contrary, are not atheistic, but aim at the religious, civil and temporal betterment of peoples . . . . The historical existence of the Jew opens with the Decalogue—the declaration of man's rights and duties. Man that, under a false Christianity, is doomed at his very birth; debased as the child of sin; denied innate rights, is raised to dignity in Israel, as a citizen of the world. Arbitrariness, caste-privileges, had displaced equality; a mighty revolution, like Mosaism, vindicates equality, the supremacy of law, a right to the pursuit of happiness, to universal improvement. The religion it imposes is no longer a mythical absurdity; the worship of a special, local god; a sacrifice of reason to the sense; a sheer negation. It is the adoration of a Supreme Being, the all-loving God. . . . Israelites among all nations have ardently taken sides with revolutionists in the act of establishing justice. They have become heralds of liberty. Rabbis have vied with each other in reproducing in Hebrew, patriotic songs, as an echo of the immortal anthem raised when the Lord of battles struck down the oppressor and made the sea to flee before His freedmen. . . . That a reaction should have first struck the Jew is not a surprise. It is rather the anticipated logical sequence of anti-revolutionary schemes. In fighting the Jew the retrogressionists fight the social progress he advocates, the religious and moral principles of which he is the fountain-head."

An Italian journal referring to that production of the Hebrew Deputy, entitled "Semitism, a Factor of Civilization," writes:

"Such a work should not be called 'a pamphlet,' as the illustrious poet modestly terms it, but rather 'an epoch-making volume in the history of human thought.' By right, it should have preceded 'The Prophet,' but several considerations induced the author to publish it separately. We trust that the sequel of 'The Prophet,'

or 'A People's Suffering'—a part of which is still inedited—will soon appear in all its completeness, to crown with fresh laurels the venerated head of David Levi."<sup>1</sup>

Since this was written, our fellow-believer of Turin has added to his renown by the finest touches of his genius. The memories of Imperial Rome and fallen Judea, which stirred up his soul from its depths, evoked a poetry that thrills. The scene of a night-vision in the seven-hilled city, might have been portrayed by a Niccolini—the classic creator of the great tragedy, *Arnoldo da Brescia*--and have done him honor.

Perhaps, the literary effort of David Levi, which will outlive even his "Semitic Songs,"—majestically clothed in varied garb, and withal so touching in pathos, so brimful of love for man and God—is his "Giordano Bruno, or the Religion of Thought," for that production appeals to all who claim Italy as their country. Already in 1842, while in Paris, our co-religionist composed in French a sketch of Bruno, but political events prevented its publication, and the writer never recovered his manuscript. When in 1848 all Europe, in the throes of national revolutions, demanded unselfish patriotism, David Levi laid down the pen to seize the sword. But immediately after 1854, when a corner of the peninsula—Sardinia—became free, he prepared a series of articles on Giordano Bruno, which were issued in the journal *La Nazione*, and then in a volume, whose edition has long been exhausted. To extend that work and leave it to posterity as the parting counsel of an Italian Jew who understood the great thinker of Nola, and commended to generations yet unborn his ideas of liberty under law, of moral and intellectual development over priestly dogmas, became the noble ambition of the Turin Israelite. A

<sup>1</sup> The first portion of the estimate of David Levi was used by the author in 1896, in a lecture delivered in the course of lectures arranged by the trustees of Gratz College in Philadelphia. See "Publications of Gratz College", I (Philadelphia, 1897), pp. 71-73. David Levi died in Venice, October 18, 1898, at the age of 82. [G]



book of four-hundred and fifty pages, enriched by authentic documents issued from the press, two years before the glorious monument by Ettore Ferrari was raised to Giordano Bruno in that same Rome, which in 1600 kindled the fire that burned alive the martyr of thought.

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#### LUZZATTI—FRANCHETTI—ARBIB

At the beginning of May, 1878, a Royal commission, appointed to represent Italy at the Paris International Exposition, started from Rome. Amadeo, the ex-king of Spain, headed it, and among the four illustrious Italians who accompanied the Prince of Savoy, LUIGI LUZZATTI figured prominently. This Israelite can claim descent from a family of Hebrew scholars and scientists, the most renowned of whose members doubtless was the late Professor at the Padua College. Such is the genealogical information which I received, years ago, in the course of a most agreeable correspondence with my valued friend, Dr. Isaiah Luzzatto. Why the last vowel in the surname was changed by the subject of the present sketch, I could not explain, but I have noticed the same oddity in other instances. Thus, "Castello," of my young days, is now, Castelli; and my deeply lamented friend "Veneziano" signed his name, Veneziani. However, the thing is irrelevant. I meant simply to convey the thought that the Luzzattos, who, during the last four hundred years, have shone by their talents in different cities of Italy, have now a brilliant exponent in one that ranks foremost as a political economist.

In 1864, a Venetian young man, of not quite twenty-seven, laid in Milan the first foundations of co-operative associations amidst the jeers of the incredulous, who styled the attempt utopian. Now, institutions of that character have spread throughout Italy, and have reached a full seven hundred, four hundred of which sent delegates to a recent Congress at Bari, presided over by the Israelite who called them into existence. Their aggregate capital in banks, originated and wisely directed by Luzzatti, is over seventy

million liras, with an illimitable credit.<sup>1</sup> What the Italian established has served as a model which other nations copy. In London, a 'Co-operative Display' is being held this season. Two hundred distinct trades, of one thousand and six hundred organizations, are there represented. Not without cause, the *Corriere Israelitico* writes: "We defy the anti-Semites to point out one of their party who has so benefited, even on a smaller scale, the people at large, as that Semite who has worked immeasurably for the welfare of the humble classes."

For years Luigi Luzzatti taught political economy at the University of Padua, but in 1883 he was induced to resign, that he might take his seat in the Chamber of Deputies to which the popular voice loudly called him. Since then, whenever international monetary questions or banking regulations affecting the government credit at home or abroad are concerned, Luzzatti's counsel is sought out as supremely authoritative. To king Humbert and his Cabinet what that Israelite decides on such points, is final;<sup>2</sup> but the Venetian peasantry, in whose midst the country seat of the Deputy lies, look upon him as a man without an equal both in qualities of the heart and in calibre of the mind. Still in a vigorous stage of life, the Hebrew dwells patriarchally in the association of those who are the constant recipients of his kindness. For the knowledge of which he is master does not overrule the sentiments. The manifestations of his science are mirrored in the communal weal, and to further public happiness, he exercises science in his immediate surroundings with singular devotion.

Luigi Luzzatti is described as pale-looking, but of a pleasing cast of countenance, with a sympathetic voice, that speaks fluently, forcibly and in flowery language. His

<sup>1</sup> Luzzatti was the first to receive the new decoration of the Order of Labor, established by king Victor Emanuel III in 1901, in recognition of his work in behalf of the laboring classes. Luzzatti was several times entrusted with the portfolio of the treasury of his country and was also given several other important diplomatic missions in recent years, later on becoming Premier of Italy. [G]

oratory, which his political adversaries call studied, is irresistible. It is of a nature to force plaudits from all sides. Let him launch into subjects in the knowledge of which he towers above all, and the more he extemporizes the greater the success.

A writer in the *Gazetta di Mantova*, who clearly is not inclined to flatter, owns that when Luzzatti addresses Parliament all petty rivalry and predisposition to fault-finding vanish like mist before the rays of the rising sun. According to the Christian correspondent of that journal, the great statistician and political economist could win the palm as an incomparable orator if, instead of holding his hands motionless, he would accompany his nervous sentences with graceful gestures. And I add, if he who has moved quickly and most nobly in aid of his country, would draw closer than he is wont to his coreligionists, and practically lend them his influential support, he could stand hereafter in the annals of Judaism where a George Jessel, or an Arthur Cohen is—splendid specimens of modern Israelites, of whom their country and our people are justly proud.

The name of FRANCHETTI brings back to memory my earliest school days. The rooms in which Jewish children, at Leghorn, met for tuition were situated near the principal synagogue. In all likelihood that location was chosen to prevent our children being molested by those of their age belonging to the Catholic belief. But the place was altogether unfit. Narrow and ill-ventilated, it invited truancy instead of encouraging attendance. The improvements occasionally made, availed nothing. All agreed that the only plan of lasting advantage would be to leave the spot and build elsewhere. Whereas the youngest among our poor classes had been neglected, and the oldest, trained for the Rabbinate, studied in a separate place—not very suitable—which served as a meeting-house for the local *Beth Din* (Ecclesiastical Court), a commodious structure would widen the range of instruction and answer all educational purposes.

Among a number of families who had emigrated from Algiers to Leghorn, there was one that Italianized its African surname, Franchetti. I retain a distinct recollection of Raimondo, a coreligionist, pious and benevolent. He had amassed great wealth, a portion of which he was willing to bestow on schemes aiming at the mental elevation of his brethren. The congregation at Leghorn thankfully accepted large gifts, which enabled it to raise a stately edifice, with infant schools, surrounded by an extensive yard; schools for boys and girls, in which Hebrew was taught from its rudiments to Talmudical literature; Italian in its many departments, foreign languages and various branches of male and female industries. Conspicuously in that structure the name of the munificent donor is engraved upon a marble slab, with a suitable inscription, in order that posterity may read and bless the memory of Raimondo Franchetti.

When the good Israelite died, his children and respective households scattered in different cities, which their affluence and learning helped very considerably. Leopoldo, a lineal descendant of the Leghorn benefactor, entered the Italian Parliament with the reputation of an historiographer of eminence. Stimulated by the researches of two able co-laborers,<sup>†</sup> the Deputy wrote a work of signal importance on the condition of Sicily, its neglected state of agriculture, due to misrule, its actual needs, the cause of its poverty and the means to resurrect it. That work is being utilized by the government.

A near relative of Leopoldo is Chevalier Augusto Franchetti. He excels as a Greek scholar. His Italian translation of some of the comedies of Aristophanes, evinces a deep insight into the cutting wit and scathing satire characteristic of that ancient Athenian. A version, that runs smooth, in terse language, is accompanied by explanatory notes and illustrations to which *literati* have

<sup>†</sup> One of whom was Sidney Sonino, with whom Franchetti later co-operated in the issue of a newspaper. [G]

awarded high encomium. Worthily representing the Hebrew community of Florence,<sup>1</sup> Chevalier Augusto Franchetti lately escorted the Princess Beatrice of Battenburg to the splendid synagogue, which Queen Victoria also admired during her visit to that city. Giuseppe Franchetti, of Mantua, occupies the responsible station of President of the Chamber of Commerce; Odoardo Franchetti is attached to the Italian Embassy at Constantinople. But among all whose ancestor was the Leghorn philanthropist, none like Alberto Franchetti, of Reggio, gathers so fast unfading laurels. The lovers of music, whom Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Mercadante and Verdi still charm, and will ever delight, may become enraptured with the creations of the author of *Asrael*. This *opera*, the *libretto* of which emanated from the facile pen of Ferdinando Fontana, was put on the stage last year, in the *Teatro Municipale*, with magnificent effect. The young *Maestro* himself led the orchestra superbly. The frequent repetitions of his production, in compliance with the popular will, drew from near and from far, critics who pronounced it classical. It is currently stated that Alberto Franchetti, who has just completed his twenty-sixth year, will astonish the musical world with the presentation of another opera, called *Zoroastro*, having engaged Fontana to write the words of the plot.

That scion of the Franchetti family is a rare example of immense opulence joined with untiring exertions; of an unconquerable passion for a fame based not upon the acquisition of gold, but on the possession of sterling merits. The father of Alberto is Baron Raimondo—his Leghorn predecessor's namesake, with whose beneficent spirit he is imbued; the mother of Alberto is born a Rothschild, having inherited countless sums. Their gifted son married a

<sup>1</sup> He has been President of the Community 1870–1899 and for many years before that an active member of the Board of directors of the Jewish community. In 1899 he was made president of the Florentine Commission of the Collegio Rabbinico Italiano, and helped a great deal in its reorganization. [G]



short time ago a beautiful Jewess, of the Levi family, who brought him a dowry of five million livres. But not a life of ease is that which the composer has selected. He nurtures ambition—it is that which will associate his name with the names of our Meyerbeer and Halevy. If we credit a report which the press has circulated, he must have almost ranked with them, or have at least approached those universally celebrated descendants of David—the God-inspired genius of poetry and music. All have read that king Humbert anxious to signalize the quadricentennial of the discovery of America by the great Genoese, with a new opera to come before the public in 1892, requested Giuseppe Verdi to undertake the task. The illustrious maestro, who felt the weight of seventy-five years, is said to have declined, and to have pointed to Alberto Franchetti as the mind capable of bringing forth what will add lustre to the Italian school of music and to the land of Columbus.

To refer to Israelites of African extraction, who settled at Leghorn and benefited its congregation, and to make no mention of the ARBIB family, would be an ungracious omission. Giacomo Arbib was not asked or expected to richly endow the Jewish schools after the manner of Raimondo Franchetti, but every instinct of his nature was directed to their progress. Taking counsel with men thoroughly skilled in the art of teaching, he secured a corps of instructors that might render learning pleasurable, while encouraging those who imparted it to the hearts and minds of the pupils. Realizing how imperative it is to mould the child's mind aright, stamping thereon healthful impressions, he devoted a vast deal of his time to the organization of infant schools. Before the sensible system of reform in education by Froebel had come in vogue, Arbib tried to develop young children's faculties by the innate power of observation, and their physical strength by gentle and entertaining exercises. Enjoying more than a competence, the philanthropist could give the little ones attention and fatherly care. But like the

## ITALIAN HEBREW LITERATURE

Franchettis, so the Arbibs partly removed their residences beyond the city of their original choice.

Notable was Lelio Arbib who, born at Leghorn, but passionately fond of English literature, traveled to Great Britain to hear in all its grandeur the language of the Bard of Avon, whose imperishable tragedies he would endeavor to transfer to the Tuscan tongue; for Dante and Shakespeare stood before the mental vision of that Hebrew as twin stars, at the refulgence of which all others in the literary horizon must pale into obscurity. His endeavors to collect the rarest manuscripts and early editions of the *Divina Comedia* were simply incredible. A whole catalogue bears witness to his tireless perseverance in that direction.

To Lelio Arbib's industry is also due the restoration of two invaluable histories in their purity—those of Jacopo Nardi and Benedetto Varchi, on the City and Republic of Florence. He subjected faultily printed writings to his ripe judgment, and in the course of an erudite preface and copious annotations, showed how he had purged the text from blunders with which ignorant proof-readers had filled it. That achievement drew forth the acclamations of the world of letters, and his recovering of the tenth book of the history of Nardi made him honorary member of foreign academies.

Had he who hungered for learning been allotted the ordinary term of life he might have satisfied, together with himself, many who relied on his exceptional culture for a widening of the field of knowledge. He was, in fact, gathering materials for an original work on the Siege of Florence, by Charles V. and Pope Clement VII., predicated upon documents to which the historians whom he illustrated had no access. But an insidious disease cut him off in the middle of his existence.

Edoardo Arbib,<sup>1</sup> whom the Italian Parliament has retained for a long series of years to associate with the noble

<sup>1</sup> Edoardo Arbib was compelled to work in a printing shop after the untimely death of his father, Lellio. In 1859, he joined the army where he was made a lieutenant. He was later associated with several news-

of his race, shedding lustre on their native country, is the son of the enthusiast who discovered in Dante and Shakespeare the potent intellects that made philosophy speak transcendental poetry, and history tell, in incomparable songs, the secret of human hearts.

#### ZELMAN, ALMANZI, MORPURGO

Unredeemed Italy—as patriots call that portion of the classic peninsula still under Austrian rule—can boast of having been the mother of Israelites distinguished for a learning varied and profound. Notably Trieste—the native city of the greatest among the Luzzatto family—may glory over persons of the Hebrew faith who even now broaden the domains of literature.

Victor Castiglioni stands prominenetly as a worker quick and intelligent, reliably honest and scrupulously exact. Trained by Moses Tedeschi,<sup>1</sup> whose lucid interpretations of the Scriptures and of Hebrew synonyms have won for him a wide reputation, Castiglioni bids his own pen help that of his good master. The pupil copies his preceptor closely in literary activity. But beyond his own writings, the ripe scholar tries to diffuse and popularize the contributions of others to the world of letters. Particularly the lamented Jellinek found in him an appreciative spokesman and clever exponent. Witness the elegant rendition into Italian of many of the sermons which immortalized the great Vienna preacher. It is, however, for those whom he dearly loved that Castiglioni labors with glowing enthusiasm.

In 1886 his friend ZELMAN died. The deceased had left behind a monument of his genius. For Samuel V. Zelman<sup>2</sup>

papers and in 1880 was elected to Parliament. He is the author of several works, mainly dealing with military subjects. [G]

<sup>1</sup> Moses Isaac Tedeschi (1821–1898) was the author of a series of commentaries covering almost the entire Bible, under the title of “*Hoil Mosheh*”. He also wrote several works on Hebrew grammar and some homiletic works. [G]

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Vita Zelman, was born in 1808 and attended the Rabbinical Seminary of Padua, where he became the most favored pupil of Samuel

was a Hebrew poet by the grace of God. Already when very young, while beneficently cared and provided for at the humble abode of the noble-hearted Luzzatto, he disclosed precocious talents: an almost intuitive capacity to penetrate into the spirit of the Holy Language. The veil which not infrequently obscures the sense of the Biblical text he could fling aside, making perfectly clear what seemed unintelligible. Castiglioni offers illustrations of his friend's ability in that important branch of Jewish learning. But he—himself no mean poet—built a niche in the temple of the muses for Samuel V. Zelman.

Luzzatto's favorite pupil had early woven grateful thoughts into charming songs. His "Nizzanim"—a cluster of poems—the young author dedicated to the famous Hebraist and critic in an address teeming with words of profound thankfulness.

Later in life, as the divine afflatus stirred his soul, Zelman would indite sonnets or sacred odes. At times his genius would break forth into nuptial lays or didactic poems; again, into satires against deceptions and pretentious philosophy, and he would also transfer to flowing Hebrew, melodious Latin rhymes. All of these Castiglioni religiously sought out and systematically arranged in an octavo volume of two hundred pages, which he entitled *Ne'im Zemiroth Shemuel*—"Samuel's sweet Psalmody"—and *Yelid Kinnor*.<sup>1</sup>

The book contains, moreover, a number of valuable letters which the author had left unpublished, and a preface by the editor, with a short biography of Zelman and of some among the most eminent Israelites who were either born in Trieste, or exercised rabbinical functions there, or filled the office of preceptors.

In an appendix, the reader is made to admire the poetical

David Luzzatto. The Jewish Encyclopedia gives as the date of his death 1885. [G]

<sup>1</sup> Literally "the child of the harp," either signifying the emanation of a harp, or being perhaps a faint allusion to the "Kinnor Na'im" of Luzzatto, from which Zelman may have drawn inspiration.

effusions of Marco Tedeschi,<sup>1</sup> too early snatched away by death from his exalted sphere—a writer whose Hebrew, like his Italian, flowed mellifluously. In that appendix the departure from earth of Rabbis Sabbato Graziadio Treves and Lelio Cantoni is deplored in elegies that thrill the soul. A splendid ode to the Torah, also by the gifted Marco Tedeschi, follows and another by the same hand, to religious and political liberty vouchsafed to Italian Jews under king Victor Emanuel, close the attractive volume.

In 1889 Castiglioni received a request from Dr. Isaiah Luzzatto, the honored son of an immortal father. The latter had catalogued the Hebrew department of Almanzi's precious library, and had written for it an introduction teeming with interesting notices. Castiglioni was asked to translate that preface into Italian to favor Dr. Zambelli, of Verona—a cultured Christian, fond of Jewish literature.

ALMANZI<sup>2</sup> dwelt at Padua where Luzzatto taught. Between the two, sentiments akin to filial affection and parental tenderness had sprung up. The young Paduan set a right estimate on Luzzatto's potent intellect, and *Shadal*<sup>3</sup> admired the young merchant whose devotion to Hebrew lore was unbounded. Almanzi would submit to Luzzatto's judgment some of his poetical productions, and

<sup>1</sup> Marco Tedeschi (1817–1870) was Rabbi in Trieste and famous as forceful preacher. [G]

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Almanzi (1801–1860) was a devoted student of Jewish history and an ardent collector of Hebrew books and manuscripts. His father who was a wealthy business man, had purchased the rich library of Hayyim Joseph David Azulai, from the latter's son, who was Rabbi at Ancona. This collection served as a stimulus to Almanzi to increase his collection by purchasing rare works and manuscripts from different sources. His library was regarded as the finest Hebrew library in Europe and many Jewish scholars availed themselves of its rich treasures. Almanzi remained unmarried and after his death, the largest number of his Hebrew manuscripts was purchased by the British Museum. His collection of Hebrew printed books was subsequently bought by Temple Emanu-El of New York and presented in 1893 to the library of Columbia University. [G]

<sup>3</sup> The appellation by which Samuel David Luzzatto is known in the literary world, forming in Hebrew the initial letters of his name.



Luzzatto would ask the business man for the loan of manuscripts which might throw light upon passages in printed works. For Joseph Almanzi, though daily engaged in the counting-room or at a store, spared neither time nor gold in his endeavor to procure the rarest manuscripts and the oldest editions of writings in a variety of languages. Not to exhibit his literary treasures artistically arranged on decorated shelves and feign vast erudition did he thus lavish his earnings; but for actual self-instruction, and to increase the erudition which he really possessed, Almanzi bestowed large sums upon olden productions. But another and still loftier aim actuated the Italian scholar. He would effectively serve men who devote their lives to Jewish learning. For, by universal admission, Almanzi's most precious collection of books was placed within reach of our savants, and they freely availed themselves of the generous spirit of the possessor. Zunz and Dukes and Fürst, and the encyclopedic Steinschneider—still at this day devoted to his untiring work, never applied in vain to the Paduan for information which they needed in the pursuit of their researches. Almanzi was a help in need and in very deed, copying, translating, lending, even for an unlimited time.

Victor Castiglioni cheerfully complied with the request of Dr. Isaiah Luzzatto. But greatly more than was sought at his hands the Israelite of Trieste accomplished to instruct and to gratify the reader. The preface of *Shadal* to Almanzi's catalogue he accompanied with brief but erudite biographical notes on every person incidentally mentioned, so that while the preface occupies five pages, the more interesting annotations fill fifteen. In them the reader forms the acquaintance of Samuel V. Lolli, the accomplished grammarian and Biblical scholar, often mentioned with praise by Luzzatto as his friendly controversialist; of Isaac S. Reggio, the versatile writer in prose and poetry, sublime in his metrical Italian version of Isaiah; of Abraham V. Reggio, chief rabbi of Gorizia, differing widely with his lay son on theological questions; of Marco S. Ghironi, who made

his mark as a writer largely by his work on "Eminent Israelites"; of Saul Formiggini, who attempted the almost impossible task of presenting in the sacred garb of the Hebrew tongue the thirty-four cantos of Dante's "Inferno." The reader meets likewise in Castiglioni's notes that prodigy—Philoxene Luzzatto—a linguist, archaeologist, critic, wearing out his existence at the age of twenty-four in investigations beyond his immediate reach.

Victor Castiglioni evinced equal respect for Joseph Almanzi as he had shown for the memory of S. V. Zelman. He edited fifteen letters in prose and a vast number of poems, elegies, epitaphs, varying in length, not included in the *Higgayon Be-Chinnor*—"Meditations on the Harp"—and in *Nezem Zahab*—"Golden Ring"—two volumes of poems of rare merit, which Almanzi had dedicated to his friend and master, the illustrious *Shadal*.

It was in 1890 that Castiglioni brought to light what crowned his efforts, as an editor of works of surpassing worth. RACHEL MORPURGO,<sup>1</sup> born to the Luzzatto family, had startled Jewish literati. They deemed it incredible that in the nineteenth century a woman could wield the pen of the scribe with so masterly a skill. Her cousin, Samuel David Luzzatto, had forwarded some of her effusions for publication to Mendel Stern, who, several decades ago, issued at Vienna a periodical called *Kochebe Yizhak*—"The Stars of Isaac"—and through Stern those effusions fell into the hands of the eminent poet, Ludwig A. Frankl. That distinguished German, surprised at what he saw, translated in beautiful metre of his own vernacular, the production of her who regretted that her identity should have been discovered.

Castiglioni, encouraged by the assistance which the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* promised, determined to sig-

<sup>1</sup> Rachel Morpurgo (1790-1871) was a member of a well-known Austro-Italian Jewish family, closely related to the Luzzatto family. Among the illustrious members of that family were Giuseppe Luzzatto Morpurgo (1762-1835) and Emilio Morpurgo (1836-1885) two notable Italian economists of the nineteenth century. [G]

nalize the centennial of the birth of the Trieste poetess by issuing from the press every line which her pen had traced.

The volume that bears the name of *Uggab Rachel*—"Rachel's Guitar"—is comprehensive. In it the scholarly editor writes an introduction in both Hebrew and Italian on the social condition of women in Biblical and Talmudical ages. He argues learnedly to show that to confound her station with the position of Eastern women under Moham-medan rule is an egregious blunder. Having called to his aid circumstances chronicled in Holy Writ; incidents recorded in post-Biblical annals; aphorisms and exhortations of the rabbis, as corroborative proofs of his assertion, he passess on to his main topic—the life-work of Rachel Morpurgo.

The resolve to send broadcast to the literary world the graceful creations of a poetess, suggested to her biographer the idea of writing an essay on the system of versification prevailing among modern Italian Jews. In the accomplishment of that undertaking, Castiglioni quotes copiously from accredited authors and convincingly demonstrates that the method followed by Hebrew poets in the peninsula, lends the rhythm a golden cadence, delightfully sweet. But in explaining the diversity of style, the essayist cites also the Ashkenazic liturgy to show specimens of the art of rhyming. Let it be candidly acknowledged: Seldom can the Ashkenazic, or even the Italian, ritual serve as a type of elegance. On the contrary, both are often defective in their wording and in grammatical construction.<sup>1</sup> Castiglioni's quotations from Professor Della Torre's effusions may fittingly answer, as patterns of a chaste diction. For his *Tal Yalduth*—"Early Dew"—sparkles with pearly beauties. Romanini, too, superbly sets forth the method of Hebrew versification, and the editor might have pointed out besides, if he had so chosen, among our contemporaries, Piperno, Ara Cohen, Costa, and very many others. But difficult

<sup>1</sup> The author evidently has reference here to the Piyyutim of the Ashkenazic Machzor and not to the regular Ashkenazic form of service which differs but little from the Sephardic. [G]

will it be to select abundantly as models, what one reads in a *Machzor* which is not Sephardic.

Rachel Morpurgo realized that fact, and she shaped her poetry in the mould of the Luzzattos, the noblest scion of which family was her cousin, the world-renowned *Shadal*. "Rachel's Guitar," whose sounds Castiglioni evoked, consists of fifty poems—properly speaking, of fifty-one, if the last, which is a mere play of words variously transposed and conveying always the same meaning, may also be reckoned. They are unlike in form, in length and in rhythm; also in merit. Not all flow with equal smoothness. Yet all of them display remarkable ingenuity and a mastery of the language employed. Occasionally, a blending of expressions from Talmud and even from the famous Zohar—which Kabbalistic work she seemed to favor—bears witness to the broadness of the education that Rachel Morpurgo had early received—singular perhaps in the nineteenth century among Jewish women.

Many of her effusions had been previously published, but not a few Castiglioni collected from scattered manuscripts. One might have wished that the zealous editor had gratified persons unacquainted with the original, by his rendition in Italian verse of several, if not all, of the creations of the heaven-inspired poetess. That he was eminently qualified for the task, his translation of our Rachel's '*Emek 'Achor*—"The Valley of Sorrow"—which he felicitously gave the reader under the title of *Grido dell' Anima*—"The Soul's Cry"—proves beyond peradventure. But, at all events, gratitude is due to the Israelite of Trieste for having prevented the loss of a vast deal which scholars will delight in, so long as the original text of our Scriptures is not cast into the pit of oblivion with the sinful intention of deliberately rooting out the language of Sinai. For not simply in verse, but also in prose, "Rachel's Guitar" played, to sound the praises of Jewish worthies.

Castiglioni favored posterity by having handed down twenty-three epistles and essays which testify to the thorough familiarity of the daughter of an exceptionally endowed

household, with the diction of both the Bible and the sages.

All honor to Victor Castiglioni of Trieste, and may the name of the Italian Jewess, whose brilliant talents and mental activity he so becomingly illustrated, be sweetly embalmed in the memory of the lovers of Judaism and its grand literature.

#### EMANUEL VENEZIANI

Chevalier Veneziani,—the almoner of Baron De Hirsch of Paris—, has, within late years, been brought prominently before the Jewish world. Closely identified with the work of the *Alliance Israelite Universelle*, in its endeavors to improve the social and cultural conditions of Eastern Jews, he has more especially won the applause of all the liberal minded, by the readiness and efficiency with which he has aided hundreds, driven from their homes in Bulgaria, through a cruel war.<sup>1</sup>

Emanuel Veneziani was born in July, 1826, at Leghorn, of parents in the humblest walks of life. So destitute were they that the child had mainly to depend upon an aunt—herself in poor circumstances—for a meal. Many a time he was compelled to seek food at the table of some kind friend. While hospitably entertained at the house of Samuel Florentino—a pious and benevolent Israelite—he was seized with a hemorrhage of the lungs so alarming, that it prostrated him upon a sick bed. The care bestowed by two daughters of the kind host, restored him to health, and he was soon enabled to follow his studies with unremitting diligence. Young Veneziani attended the Jewish free schools, and there he very early manifested qualities of the heart, which have distinguished him ever since. Having gained a prize for proficiency in secular learning, he accepted it only on condition that he might share it with three of his schoolmates, who had nearly come up to his standard. An act so generous from a lad in a very needy situation, pleased the school directors exceedingly. It was reported to the editor of a literary magazine, issued at

<sup>1</sup> The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878. [G]



Florence, by the principal teacher, Solomon Cohen. The name of Emanuel did not appear in the published account, but all knew who was meant by "the Jewish lad of Leghorn." Dr. Modigliani, a public-spirited Israelite, took a lively interest in the lad, and tried earnestly to promote his welfare. For a time he was placed under the tuition of Rabbi A. B. Piperno—subsequently Chief Rabbi—to learn theology, in the expectation that he would be reared for the ministry; but the bent of Veneziani's mind was not upon that calling. In 1846, when he had not yet completed his twentieth year, he left Leghorn for Salonica, in the capacity of tutor at the house of the Allatini family. To impart the knowledge acquired, and thus widen the sphere of his intellect, proved a congenial occupation, and the aptness of the pupils added zest to its agreeableness. An affection sprung up between preceptor and scholars which the various changes wrought by time have not lessened.

While at Salonica, Veneziani made the acquaintance of the Camondos. His quick perception, his broad views and his noble character, were the recommendations that secured for him the position of confidential secretary of that famous banking house in European Turkey. At Constantinople, where he settled in 1854, Emanuel Veneziani organized savings-banks, and associations for the relief of the sick and the poor. Considering Masonry a powerful means to liberalize his coreligionists, he created subordinate lodges, under the auspices of Italian grand lodges, and for many years conducted them in a manner, which made him the central figure among the Jewish population. He used his influence to insist upon the establishing of hospitals, as well as of homes for the destitute, who had been cured of the cholera, when this disease raged in the capital. On the occasion of a disastrous fire, Veneziani risked his own life, and by presence of mind saved many who would otherwise have been a sure prey to the flames. Victor Emanuel, king of Italy—ever ready to recognize merit—having heard that one of his subjects had behaved so bravely, sent him a double decoration with expressions of his royal approval.

But the great aim of the Leghorn Jew was to win the favor of the Turkish government, that he might have it in his power to benefit his oppressed fellow-believers. And he reached that noble object through the Camondos. Several privileges theretofore denied and now enjoyed by the Hebrews under the Crescent, are due to the influence exercised by Veneziani. To the credit of the Italian ambassador Bertolami, be it said that the Israelite found in the Christian gentleman a ready co-worker. In fact, the good feeling existing between the two, inured to the advantage of both Italy and the Porte; for Veneziani proposed measures of great commercial importance, and travelled to Rome to see personally to their adoption. But a new field of activity to the philanthropic Hebrew was the *Alliance Israelite Universelle*. He caught the spirit of that grand organization, and lent it his best energies. He entered into correspondence with the venerable Cremieux, formed committees, at the head of which the oldest of the firm of Camondo was sagaciously put; but he himself, acting as vice-president, imparted life and strength to institutions of learning and beneficence. He planned the system of education to be pursued, he devised the means for raising funds, and he was one among several,—neither the last nor the least—who led Baron De Hirsch to those acts of signal munificence by which a million francs, were given to found and support Jewish schools in Turkey.

The Camondos wishing to extend their banking-house, resolved to open in Paris a branch of that long existing in Constantinople. Their confidential secretary was asked to take up his residence in the French capital. There, his advice is sought after by his coreligionists devoted to the cause of humanity, and his experience is recognized and followed, as a reliable standard. Unhappily, recent events brought that experience into requisition. All our readers remember the unspeakable suffering of men, women and children of different ages and creeds, throughout the countries which the iron heel of Russia trod upon; they can recall how a large number remained homeless, how many died, starved and froze, and how the piercing cry of those who

begged for food and shelter reached our shores. To Veneziani, Baron De Hirsch entrusted the holy mission of going where charity was most imperatively needed; and of relieving all, independent of nationality or religion. The Leghorn Israelite, acquainted with the languages of the East and of the West, bringing to the discharge of his task a vast deal of discretion and discernment, and a heart overflowing with kindness, acquitted himself so splendidly, that modern history has reserved for him a golden page. Not alone—says one of our correspondents—did Emanuel Veneziani leave his home comforts, to hasten and administer to the wants of his fellow-creatures; not alone did he stir up the Turkish Jews to contribute their mite towards assisting the refugees; but by the influence he wielded, he induced the Chief Rabbi of Constantinople to gather the people at the synagogue, and exact a promise that each family would, in turn, supply the unfortunate who had fled from the Cross to the Crescent, with a meal and a bed, till they could provide for themselves. These latter incidents, published extensively in European journals, and reproduced in American papers, have been set forth conspicuously in the last report issued by the *Alliance*, in the month of November 1877.

The subject of our biographical sketch is married and has raised a large number of children, but he does not forget those near akin, nor his early associates. Looking to the settlement in life of his own sisters, he gave the dowry—an indispensable accompaniment to marriage everywhere in foreign countries. His brothers he greatly helped to earn a decent livelihood. In the days of prosperity he illustrates the feelings evinced in the years of destitution by encouraging talent, and raising the fallen. Goodness and uprightness have elevated Emanuel Veneziani from the humblest state to a lofty position; the practice of those virtues has insured for the Leghorn Jew a name and a fame which will not die.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A sketch of Veneziani's life appears in H. S. Morais' "Eminent Israelites of the Nineteenth Century", p. 339-341. [G]

## A NOBLE LIFE

While recalling the early stages in the history of Veneziani,<sup>1</sup> the mind finds itself instinctively carried into the midst of an Italian family most considerate and kind. "Manuel Veneziano," as we boys called him, owed that family a great deal which contributed to the moulding of his beautiful character. When I became a member of a choice circle of students who met at the house of Samuel Florentino, situated in Via Reale, at Leghorn, I enjoyed the hospitality which the father and his motherless sons and daughters heartily offered, but for Veneziani the courteous parent and his six children had the door of their humble home wide open at all times. The kind people felt that the lad needed refining influences, besides a meal; for he was born of parents utterly destitute and quite ordinary in their social standing. What he lacked in his immediate surroundings, he was largely given where tacit lessons of good breeding, self-reliance and morality could be imbibed.

Samuel Florentino was genuinely pious, deriving satisfaction from devotional exercises, being perfectly content with his moderate earnings and pleased with the intercourse of the promising youths, whom he always welcomed. Without laying the least claim to erudition, he could quote Hebrew Scriptures and Mishnah, from having made it a practice to read portions of both daily. His religious turn of mind led him to have two of his sons, Abram and Angiolo, trained for the ministry, as a calling he honored, but neither saw fit to enter it; still in the Jewish schools which they attended many facilities were afforded to gain also the secular learning, of which they availed themselves extensively.

Veneziani was their intimate associate at home and at school, and his genial and sympathetic nature made him a favorite with all the pupils and teachers. Salvatore De

<sup>1</sup> These reminiscences were prepared by the author, at the request of the Philadelphia Public Ledger, and published in the issue of March 9, 1889, a few weeks after Veneziani's death. [G]

Benedetti especially showed the bright-minded and warm-hearted youth exceeding fondness. Under that eminent scholar<sup>†</sup>—now Professor of Semitic Literature in the Royal University at Pisa, and renowned in Italy as the author of several meritorious works, but more widely known for his “Canzoniere” on Judah ha-Levi’s poetic writings—Veneziani studied belles lettres and Latin. Often the two would remain to chat familiarly after the class had been dismissed, or walk to the cafe, discussing social and communal topics. Some time ago, De Benedetti, alluding to his having seen Veneziani in his travels through Italy, thus expressed himself to me in a letter: “I have always considered our very dear Veneziani as one of the dearest of my Leghorn pupils. He still possesses a heart overflowing with generosity.”

But long before the choice of De Benedetti as *Rettore*, Veneziani pursued his studies diligently, spending the evenings at Florentino’s, to prepare his lessons, not infrequently up in a garret, till the tallow candle gave out, when he laid himself down next to one of his friends. In one of his communications to me, in 1880, from Madrid, where he represented the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* before a conference of diplomatists, and urged the continuance of consular protection to Jews of Spanish descent at Morocco, after giving a detailed account of his endeavors at the Berlin Congress in behalf of the Roumanian Jews, he wrote: “Could you have believed it, when we were together at Florentino’s that one of the most wretchedly situated among our circle would one day have it in his power to plead for human rights in that fatal land, wedded to fanaticism—the land which sought to blot out the very name of our race? Yet God willed it so.”

It was but natural that Veneziani, looking back on the trials he had overcome, should consider himself an instrument of Providence; the more so because at one time he had been threatened with an insidious disease. As he was developing into manhood, his friends feared that he

<sup>†</sup> See p. 224, 228 ff.



would fast go into consumption. But then also he received at Florentino's the tender care which restored him to distressed humanity, and he could resume the studies which qualified him for blissful undertakings. In 1846 I had returned to Leghorn, after an unsuccessful effort to be appointed assistant Reader at one of the synagogues in London. Abram Florentino, Veneziani and myself were about to part; the first to Constantinople, the second to Salonica as private tutors, and I once more to London by invitation of the directors of an orphan school. We three were standing in the dining room at Florentino's. Veneziani, with his usual boyancy of temperament, said, "Let us pledge ourselves to meet here again in the summer of 1849." That promise was destined to remain unfulfilled. At Salonica, his wide capacities, his earnestness and the zeal evinced as preceptor at Dr. Allatini's, drew the attention of Count Nissim Camondo, member of the great Constantinople banking house. Veneziani accepted the honorable position of confidential secretary to that firm in the capital of European Turkey, and there he settled. There he distinguished himself by a courageous mercifulness that saved lives, by a keen intelligence that planned institutions fostering thrift, by an unquenchable ardor for the cause of education, that furthered the workings of the *Alliance*. So much he did there, and so well did he do it, that a double decoration was awarded to him. Friends at Leghorn and elsewhere rejoiced greatly when the poor boy who had left his native place in 1846 had been made Chevalier of the Crown of Italy and Commander of Al Medjid—honors gained by most honorable means. But he who wore the stars over his breast, prized, above all, memories embalmed in his generous heart. A recent visit to the city in which he had resided the longest, and which he had benefited most, was a triumphant entry. To press the hand ever open to give discreetly and quick to apply a restorative balm to sufferers, was the wish of a whole population in that vast centre of Oriental Judaism. Constantinople had become Veneziani's loved home, after Leghorn,

because there he married and reared a cultured family. In 1857 the news reached me that he had become engaged to a good and fair Jewess, of rich parentage. Since that time I seldom heard of him, except from journals in the interest of the Hebrew people, which described his activity in setting up schools throughout the East, in mitigating the dire consequences of cruel wars, in dispensing large sums to the poor, in journeying far to bring his influence and that of the man whose almoner and counsellor he was, to bear on the uplifting of his down-trodden brethren.

But a cheerful letter, that awakened pleasing memories, was followed in 1882 by another full of anguish. Veneziani announced to me the death of his son Victor at Paris. He wrote: "My sorrow deepens as I think of my poor Victor's sweet disposition. Nature had gifted him with qualities promising to gladden my advancing age. He was so good and studious. At twenty-one, after obtaining the title of Bachelor of Laws, he was deemed fit to enter the high department of schools of jurisprudence, and would have been admitted to the bar only one year later. The hopes of a brilliant future were dashed against the grave by two weeks' sickness. I cannot reconcile myself to the loss of that angel of mine." But Veneziani was a man of action. He could not be chained by grief to inertness. Tenderly sensitive, he still could rise above sorrow and hasten where duty imperatively called.

After the war which ended disastrously for France at Sedan, Baron de Hirsch had asked the confidant of the Camondos to lend him that ripe judgment needed for the administration of charity. To devote the rest of his existence to such a task was the ideal of one who, in his early days, had experienced want and the fear of what the morrow might bring forth. Israelites universally know how he acquitted himself, but a passage in the funeral oration by Zadoc Kahn, Grand Rabbi of Paris, expresses it fittingly. "The missionary of mercy went wheresoever his presence was considered useful; everywhere he conveyed benefactions which were exhaustless. Nothing could hold him back;

fatigue, the distance of the journey, the rigor of the seasons could not deter him. We have seen him, amidst the severity of winter, run to Turkey to relieve misery and breathe fresh courage into millions of unhappy beings, victims of a bloody war. We have seen him a voluntary exile from home during many a week while performing at Brody<sup>1</sup> a work which borders on the wonderful, and which was completed through his remarkable power of endurance, through the weight of his character and the authority of his word. We have seen him, in the same spirit of abnegation, in the same forgetfulness of self, undertake a voyage to Palestine,<sup>2</sup> to study the situation, with that conscientiousness which ruled him always, and to seek, as far as compatible with circumstances, to improve the status of our co-religionists in that country."

"In all his delicate missions Veneziani admirably justified the confidence he inspired. He proved his signal ability to organize; and to a foresight and veracity which did not underrate difficulties, he joined a passion for doing good, an enthusiasm and a perseverance that never failed to conquer."

But his labors extended beyond the Eastern Hemisphere. In 1884, in a letter descriptive of his travels in the interest of new colonies planted far and wide, he asked information about the feasibility of a plan to send to America 200 families, mostly farmers and mechanics, whom he would assist to settle in a desirable spot. I consulted the late Michael Heilprin, whose best energies had been directed to the betterment of refugees from inhospitable lands, and at my instance he communicated with Veneziani. The

<sup>1</sup> In 1881, Veneziani and Charles Netter were sent by the Alliance to Brody to assist the many Russian Jewish refugees who had gathered there to emigrate to distant lands. The Alliance set aside a million francs which were handed to Veneziani for that purpose (Jew. Ency., s. v.) [G]

<sup>2</sup> When Veneziani was elected a member of the Central Committee of the *Alliance* in 1883, he undertook a tour of the Jewish colonies in Palestine and it was by his advice that further Jewish immigration into Palestine through the Alliance was checked (ib). [G]

project was not consummated, but last year, when I explained to my friend at Paris that the settlers at Carmel, New Jersey, who had petitioned for aid, were the same people whom the philanthropic Heilprin had tried to benefit, the sum asked for arrived without delay.

The heart which beat high with compassion is now stilled; the mind teeming with designs to elevate the lowly has ceased to act here below; the mighty worker was suddenly palsied in the midst of his restless activity. Returning home from Vienna, where he had gone to prepare the way for disposing judiciously of the 12,000,000 francs appropriated by Baron de Hirsch for educational objects, he was seized with a malady that in a single week robbed humanity of his efforts.

Veneziani lived to a sublime purpose. He lived to prove the fallacy of a belief in chance. He may emphatically be called "a self-made man;" but he shaped his career aright. The success he met with was due to determination, constancy, kindness and honor. Truthful and just as a child, he did not swerve from rectitude when in manhood temptations thickened about him. The broad knowledge of the world which he acquired, was the handmaid of his noble resolve, never the master daring to override the dictates of integrity.

Veneziani at Leghorn, fitting himself for the high duties of life; Veneziani at Salonica, as teacher in a private family; Veneziani at Constantinople directing the affairs of capitalists; Veneziani at Paris, the almoner of a philanthropic millionaire, is a study to youths of all nations, creeds and countries. His splendid career, here faintly delineated by a distant friend who grieves at his loss, may be brought to view hereafter in all its moral attractiveness. To quote the language of M. G. Montefiore, private secretary of the illustrious dead: "It is hoped that a masterly hand may soon portray the striking traits of a life ever active in its aim to lessen the misery which a people has unjustly suffered for many ages, because it would keep unscathed the heirloom entrusted to its guardianship, and the preservation of which made Israel a proof against the fierce strokes of misfortune."



## ELIAS BENAMOZEGH AND DAVID CASTELLI

He must be a bold man who rises amidst an assemblage of the learned, and assumes to tell what is new in the world of letters. In this age of rapid communication, scarcely has a work worth preserving issued from the press before interpreters in multifarious ways place it within the easy reach of scholars of every nationality. Germany, where those who labor in the field of literature are proof against fatigue, garners with singular diligence the food for instruction. A Steinschneider at Berlin peers almost ubiquitously into that which the ancients, born in the Sinaitic faith, have left written, and his encyclopedic undertaking takes a range so comprehensively wide, as to hold very nigh all that modern authors bring forth.

I have heard that exceptions are taken to statements made by our Jewish historian at Breslau; and, indeed, his Biblical criticism—as I have read it—is hypothetical and daring; yet they who fail to see in Graetz a versatile genius pre-eminently methodical, a capacity unsurpassed to find and rescue from oblivion valued memorials; they who deny the illustrious septuagenarian a vast erudition and a graceful diction, must have their vision dimmed by a film of ignorance or prejudice.

Now, with such luminous demonstrations of an activity which has succeeded in arranging attractively for the beholder, scattered treasures from East and West, what can sheer mediocrity hope for? All that a speaker such as the one who is addressing this ministerial convention may aspire to, is to clothe in a different garb, what has been already shown under diverse aspects.

When your painstaking Secretary asked in your name that I should prepare for this meeting a paper on some Italian Jew, whose literary achievements had won for him celebrity, my mind instinctively turned to Luzzatto. For him I have studied assiduously, and, while acknowledging that his sympathies and antipathies were too strong to allow, in every instance, a clearly impartial judgment, still the



sterling honesty of the Professor at the Rabbinical College in Padua and his deep-rooted attachment to traditional Judaism, rendered him the ideal, that I strove to approach. But my unalterable admiration for a fellow-believer and a compatriot truly admirable, did not lure me into a subject perhaps trite—at all events, one that has been presented by myself in various manners, with a frequency that some may consider wearisome. I therefore dismissed it, and be-thought myself of another.

From Lombardy I travelled mentally to fair Tuscany, and halted there to survey two literary characters of opposite tendencies: they are Elias Benamozegh, of Leghorn, and David Castelli, of Florence. Neither, I think, is familiarly known to all my colleagues in America; yet, both these Italians exhibit an activity which rivals that of our co-religionists in German lands.

Benamozegh<sup>1</sup> inherited from a long line of ancestry a marvellous aptness for Hebrew knowledge. I remember to have heard from my sainted teacher, Chief Rabbi Abraham B. Piperno, that Benamozegh's father, who emigrated from Fez, Morocco, to Leghorn, fitted Biblical sentences into his ordinary conversation so cleverly and with such spontaneity as to create amazement. But with the ability to speak and write the sacred language faultlessly, the son inherited also a fondness for mysticism which—with less ill effects than in Northern Europe, but with no less an encroachment upon pure Mosaism—prevails in Africa and, alas! in Palestine and Eastern Asia, too, among our brethren.

They would, however, err egregiously who should suppose that Elias Benamozegh countenances the vagaries of Kabbalism as exhibited in Sadagora,<sup>2</sup> according to the

<sup>1</sup> Born at Leghorn in 1822 and died there in 1900. A sketch of his life is given in H. S. Morais' "Eminent Israelites of the Nineteenth Century" (Philadelphia, 1880), pp. 23-27. See Jew. Ency., s. v. [G]

<sup>2</sup> A town in Galicia, the seat of one of the famous Zaddikim. The reference, of course, is to the modern Hasidic sect, of the tenets and underlying philosophy of which, our author could have no intimate knowledge. [G]

narrative of the pro-Semitic Christian, Sacher-Masoch, or that he does not turn away with pain from that which assumed so grievous a form in Podolia.

The experiences of Karl Emil Franzos, whose tales touched our hearts' core; the sad revelations which that pen-painter graphically held to view in the "Child of the Atonement," and over which I wept because of the soul-withering aberrations of our co-heirs of the covenant, would draw tears also from the Leghorn writer. Nor does he claim for the whole of the Zohar—the bulwark of Kabbalism—an authorship so remote as that of the Mishnaic sage, Simeon, son of Yohai.

What Adolphe Franck terms "the religious philosophy of the Hebrews," is to Benamozegh an esoteric science, the offspring of profound truths. It is not simply a theosophy, or a direct insight into the relations of the Infinite and the finite. Benamozegh calls it "Theodicy," or a vindication of the justice of God in His dealings with mortals.

Read, for instance, his "Em le-Mikra,"<sup>1</sup> an extensive Hebrew commentary on the Pentateuch. You will wonder at the store of learning it contains on the history of religions, on schools of philosophy, on philology, on Biblical criticism, and withal on Talmudical and post-Talmudical writings. But you will not need to search far to discover that, like so many rays of light converging into a focus, so do the utterances of the expositor tend to one point, to his theodicy, the Kabbalah, which he aims to establish firmly and to extol.

It was in defense of that science, to which he is wedded, that Elias Benamozegh, when only a youth, arose with manly vigor to fight an anti-Kabbalistic giant of the seventeenth century. All have heard of the "Ari Nohem," whose roarings frightened into silence the disciples of the school of Luria in Italy. Leo de Modena, rabbi at Venice, had attacked the citadel of Kabbalism, by denouncing the

<sup>1</sup> Published together with the text of the Pentateuch, under the title "Torat Adonai", Leghorn and Paris, 1862-65. [G]

Zohar, and with a trenchant logic had brought low the high pretensions of its followers to superhuman knowledge. Benamozegh saw the object of his early affection exposed to the pillory of public contempt. He hastened to the rescue in his "Emath Mafgia".<sup>1</sup> In this Hebrew work strenuous efforts were made to demolish powerful arguments with the force of a keen intellect well-trained in polemics. But thirty-five years ago there stood forth against the Kabbalah an antagonist whom few would have ventured to confront. Samuel David Luzzatto, deeply chagrined at the inroads of Hasidism, so hostile to culture, so inimical to refining influences, had drawn a writing of his young days out of a repository where it had long been resting. It was "A Dialogue on the Kabbalah," which he dedicated, in lieu of an epithalamium, to his youthful friend, G. I. Ascoli, of Gorizia, now the famous archaeologist of Milan, honored imperially as an associate member of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Berlin, and as Chevalier of the Order of "Merito Civile," of Savoy, a title which only sixty-three among the noblest citizens of Italy have ever received.

Benamozegh did not, of course, consider evidence damaging to the cause which he has espoused, at all convincing. In the gracefully-written preface to his "Ta'am Leshad",<sup>2</sup> he confesses that he is about to face an opponent whose exceptional equipment rendered him formidable; nevertheless, the paladin of Kabbalism sallies forth courageously, and if he does not carry off a trophy, he certainly displays in the warfare a fund of resources really stupendous.

In fact, he has that almost exhaustless fund, ready at his command on all occasions, and nowhere perhaps does he draw more largely upon it than in his "History of the Essenes,"<sup>3</sup> written in Italian. In that book, Benamozegh attempts what appears to me an impossibility. He essays to identify an unaccountably strange sect of pietistic communists, to which only an abnormal condition of affairs in

<sup>1</sup> Published in two parts, Leghorn, 1858. [G]

<sup>2</sup> Published, Leghorn, 1863. [G]

<sup>3</sup> "Storia degli Esseni", Florence, 1865. [G]

Judea could have given origin—the ascetic celibates, the Essenes, I mean—with a body of a chosen few among the Pharisees to whom, he alleges, the secret guardianship of Kabbalistic science was confided.

But, however wide the divergence of opinion between Benamozegh and the thinkers of our times, all award to him the merit of throwing rare light on numerous topics, while in the act of clearing the Kabbalah from the charge of obscurantism. It is his far-reaching acquaintance with antiquities and the whole range of modern literature, that has attracted towards him the attention of learned individuals and of organizations. In 1868 the comprehensive association, known as *L'Alliance Israelite Universelle*, offered a prize for a work that would prove the indebtedness of other religions to Judaism, and especially the lofty standard of Jewish ethics, which will suffer nothing in comparison with that inculcated by the broadest civilization.

Who fitter for the task than the Rabbi-Preacher at Leghorn? I will quote his own words: "The question propounded could not but arouse within me a wish to lay hold of a subject for which a happy coincidence, a deep interest and long and active studies seemed—if I dare say it—to have prepared me beforehand." Yet, he who so confidently wrote, waited. When a year had elapsed, and no one of the aspirants obtained the prize, Benamozegh responded to his own inclination, and to the urgent request of friends. He brought forth his "Jewish and Christian Morality,"\* a volume containing also a second part on "The Dogmas and Morality of Islam." Were it possible to condense in a single sentence what the author advances in four hundred pages fraught with learning, I would say this: In that French work, Benamozegh accords to Christianity the merit due to it as a progressive phase in the history of humanity, but shows its impracticability in excluding patriotism, to make room for an unnatural cos-

\* "Morale Juive et Morale Chretienne. Examen Comparatif Suivi de Quelques Reflexions sur les Principes de l' Islamisme", Paris, 1867.[G]

mopolitanism; whereas Moses and the sages sensibly drew a line between devotion to one's people and country, and fellow-feeling towards all mankind. In that manner, Benamozegh vindicates Hebrew laws, which prejudice condemns as savoring of tribal narrowness. He admits the utility of racial preferences, without rising as an apologist of racial wrongs. That he hates might when it crushes right by brutal force, he has unequivocally demonstrated in his French volume, "*Le crime de la guerre*,"<sup>1</sup> which gained for the author a medal from the Peace Congress that met in Paris under the presidency of Jules Simon.

If I understand Benamozegh correctly—and I have read with more or less profit nearly all his multifarious writings in Hebrew, Italian and French, I may declare him a staunch defender of the faith, interpreted after a philosophico-dogmatic Kabbalism; an enthusiast who sees evolution in Judaism by a universal acceptance of its underlying doctrines. He holds that the Jew as the first born in the religious family, being in the immediate contact of the Shekinah, or the Divine manifestation, will retain his sacred character by clinging to Mosaism; the rest of the world or the younger offspring, will be finally recognized as members of an all-embracing religious household, by adherence to the seven Noahide precepts, which lie at the basis of the social fabric.<sup>2</sup>

Who is he that bids a facile pen write down Benamozegh as a metaphysical utopian? It may surprise you, to learn that the opponent of the prolific author is one who, for a time at least, sat at his feet as a pupil, and who had long frequented his house with the intimacy of a friend. David Castelli may also boast of a worthy

<sup>1</sup> "*Le Crime de la Guerre Denonce a l'Humanite*", Paris, 1881. [G]

<sup>2</sup> In an Italian work by the same author, entitled "*Teologia Dogmatica ed Apologetica*" (Leghorn, 1877), Benamozegh endeavors to present in a systematic form his views on religion and mysticism and evinces a wide acquaintance with the various schools of philosophy, both ancient and modern. He also contributed largely to French and Italian periodicals on the subjects of Philosophy and Kabbalah. [G]



lineage. His great-grandfather, when a lad, travelled from Ancona to Leghorn in search of a livelihood. While learning to make coral necklaces, he would sing Spanish and Italian canzonets charmingly. His employer rightly thought that the youth was more fitted to be a cantor at the sacred desk, than a journeyman in a factory. Abraham Isaac Castelli became Hazzan in the principal synagogue, but he was likewise one of the numerous instances of an Italian Hazzan who, to the acknowledged ability of reading and chanting the Sephardic ritual well, joined an appreciable acquaintance with Biblical and Rabbinical literature,<sup>1</sup> with homiletics and the art of rhyming. Castelli preached not Kabbalistic sophistry and meaningless platitudes, as the great Zunz with insufficient knowledge of Italian schools, intimated in a work, otherwise most valuable. The Italian Hazzan spoke intelligently and logically, and to a humanizing purpose. He poetized also, at a time when events in the Jewish community were wont to elicit nuptial songs or elegies. So fond was Castelli of letters and the sciences, that he sent his oldest son Joseph to Pisa, to be taught medicine and philosophy, and at the untimely demise of that child of bright promise, his younger brother Samuel filled his vacant place as a noted practitioner. From the latter sprung Abraham Isaac Castelli, his grandsire's namesake, and the first Israelite—if I am not in error—who was allowed in Tuscany to enter the bar and plead in non-Jewish courts.

David Castelli, now Professor at the Royal University in Florence, is the offspring of the counsellor-at-law. But, if, like Benamozegh, he received a heritage of brilliant talents, he does not allow them to illumine the path leading to the observance of the faith which his ancestors labored to perpetuate. The soul-stirring orations of our prophets do strike a responsive chord in the heart of the descendant

<sup>1</sup> "Castelli is probably the Jewish scholar with whom Lessing conversed during his scientific tour in the company of Duke Leopold of Brunswick, and, on hearing whom, the duke is said to have exclaimed in astonishment, 'Here we have one even greater than Mendelssohn—of far purer metaphysics'" (Jew. Ency., s. v.) [G]

of the synagogue reader and preacher. His work on Hebrew poetry, exhibits the glow of enthusiasm, which our inimitable bards must ever enkindle, but cold ratiocinations are offered to the reader, when the Messiah question is treated. In the volume "*Il Messia secondo gli Ebrei*" by David Castelli, Holy Writ and Talmud are metamorphosed, so that, clothed in a new garb they may serve new purposes. It was natural that a sentiment of deep mortification should stir within the breast of the teacher and friend, at the publication of that unwelcome volume. Benamozegh combatted views which deny Judaism a mission, incompletely and defectively taken up by Christianity. Was it resentment which called forth a critique from the professor at Florence on the work of the Leghorn Rabbi-Preacher, concerning the existence of God ontologically discussed? The suspicion arose, and gave occasion to a literary contest. Others shall judge on whose side victory took its stand. I am incompetent to decide because of my theological proclivities. Yet, I would commit an injustice if I condemned the work of Castelli altogether. "*Il Messia secondo gli Ebrei*," has merits that none dare underestimate. Some obscure rabbinical sayings receive by it an ingenious construction that scholars will appreciate. Thus, by way of illustration, the identifying of Armilos, whom a legend makes the destroyer of Messiah ben Joseph, with Romulus, typifying Rome that crushes Israel's national hopes in Judea—commends itself to favor. Even the last page of the book, destitute as it is, indeed, of historical foundation, fanciful as it is, possesses a depth of feeling that pleases me. I will translate part of the closing paragraph: "Sentiments have their language which finds expression in metaphors and symbols best interpreted and expounded by reason. The pleasing anticipation of an era in which wrong, crime and misfortune will cease; in which all will be happy, because all will be sinless, is symbolically presented under the guise of a Messiah, who has lived since mankind has existed, and who has suffered and borne contempt; for, such is and has unhappily been the lot of many a mortal. But we have

seen him also triumphant and happy, and we cannot gainsay that so are many human beings. The Messiah then, the looked-for Redeemer, who has lived during long ages, who may appear any day, is none other than man himself, or mankind collectively, now cast down, anon arisen; mankind that can atone for its own sins, that can redeem itself from evils. The era in which humanity, self-redeeming, and thus redeemed, will enjoy the greatest amount of happiness, is the ushering in of that undefined progress toward which we continually move on. It is the golden era for which arts, science and the civilization of numerous centuries have been long preparing." But the principal merit which I assign to Castelli's book is that which will be awarded to it by all the unprejudiced. He does not dismiss the Messianic idea, promulgated by sages, sanctified by martyrs, cherished still by the myriads of suffering Israel, with vulgar jests; nor does he attempt to explain it away by a distortion of Hebrew sentences, against which grammar, syntax and plain common sense exclaim. Though I pronounce "Il Messia secondo gli Ebrei," a writing based upon false premises, and constructed of false conclusions, I recognize it as the issue of serious thought, seriously set forth.

Were I asked in what manner has David Castelli placed the world of letters under obligation, I would answer: in collating rare manuscripts,—availing himself of some heretofore uninspected in the Laurentian Library at Florence—and producing a superb edition of the best commentary extant on *Sepher Yezirah*.<sup>1</sup> Addressing a Conference of learned divines, I am freed from the necessity of showing the value of the Comment which the Professor at the Florentine University enriched with a preface in Hebrew, an extensive introduction in Italian, and explanatory foot-notes in both

<sup>1</sup> "Il Commento di Sabbatai Donnolo al Libro della Creazione, Testo Ebraico con Note Critiche e Introduzione in Ebraico e in Italiano", Florence, 1880, in "Pubblicazione del Regio Istituto di Studi Superiori" [G]

languages.<sup>1</sup> Yet I confess that a strong inclination would impel me to dwell on the history of a book which has enchaind the attention of a Judah ha-Levi—our philosopher-poet—and I would endeavor to exonerate the deservedly renowned Spaniard from the charge of having believed, that Abraham could have written the work, which Kabbalism deems the corner-stone of its mystical edifice. I would let internal evidences demonstrate that the immortal author of the *Kuzari*, considered only the ideas embodied in *Sepher Yezirah* as an emanation of the mind of the patriarch, before the God of nature had manifested His absolute creative powers to the father of the faithful.

#### A CHRISTIAN HEBREW SCHOLAR.

The Talmudists, in their forceful way of teaching, tell us that Hillel the Elder and Eleazar ben Harsom are quoted at the bar of the Supreme Judge, as instances of devotion to sacred learning, in opposite circumstances—extreme poverty in one case; exceeding riches in the other. The conduct of those two sages is pointed to as a rebuke to Israelites who neglect the study of the Law, either on the plea of want, or of engrossing business. I conceive that to cause many an Israelite of our own days to blush, mention will be made in the highest tribunal not alone of ancient preceptors of our people, but of modern Christians also —of Christians who are illustrations of fond love for Jewish learning.

Scarcely a paper in the interest of our literature is published abroad, without containing a notice or a review of works upon that topic, written or edited by non-Jewish persons. Of late, the Bodleian library at Oxford has given scope to the activity of Hebrew scholars who do not belong to our creed. Thus Hunt, Collins, Mathews, and others among their co-laborers have brought to light rare manuscripts of the Talmudic ages, or of the Arab-Spanish period.

<sup>1</sup> Our author gives a brief sketch of the life and works of Donnolo in his paper on "Italian Jewish Literature", published in "Publications of the Gratz College", I, (Philadelphia, 1897), pp. 56-58; see p. 4. [G]

A personage, however, whose indefatigableness may be cited hereafter to the confusion of a vast number of both our rich and our poor, is the Catholic prelate in the royal library at Parma. Peter Perreau never lets his pen drop from weariness. Moving in a pantheon of Hebrew thinkers, he gazes intently upon our celebrities only to mark out the productions of their minds as subjects of his research. In a striking manner has the attention of the learned Abbot been riveted on the inedited works of the universally renowned Immanuel—the contemporary and friend of Dante. Scriptural commentaries whereon the versatile poet of the thirteenth century prides himself in his cantos (Mahberoth), but of which posterity possessed heretofore a very scanty knowledge, have been unfolded by Perreau and enriched with a store of erudition.<sup>1</sup>

Recently, a lengthy account of Immanuel's threefold explanation of Canticles, was followed by an elaborate exposition of mediæval writings upon the same Biblical volume, with an occasional reference to the lives and characters of the writers themselves. Another literary undertaking, in the course of publication by the untiring Abbot, is a synopsis of Immanuel's commentary on Job, which, like many of Perreau's effusions, is appearing seriatim in the meritorious magazine, *Antologia Isarelitica*, of Corfu.

It is this periodical that has reproduced in its June number a brief biographical notice of the Christian savant who deserves so well of Hebrew lore, and I deem it a privilege to present that notice prior to my making allusion to still later productions of the worthy prelate.

Peter Perreau was born at Piacenza, October 27th, 1827. As the name denotes, he is of French extraction. His father who was a civil engineer married at Piacenza a lady of distinction. Their son—the subject of this sketch—entered college when quite young, and studied there for five consecutive years. While at college, he devoted his leisure

<sup>1</sup> Perreau edited and published in polygraphic editions the commentaries of Immanuel on Psalms (Parma, 1879–1882), on Esther (1880) and on Lamentations (1881). [G]



hours to languages, and he learned Greek, German in its numerous ramifications, English, Russian, Polish and Hebrew. In 1853 he gave himself particularly to the study of philology and philosophy, and having gone to Sardinia for his health, he was elected professor of Greek and German, first in the *Charles Albert* college at Moncalieri, and afterwards in that of *Maria Louisa* at Parma. Chosen in 1857 director of the *Landi* library at Piacenza, he collated the catalogue and set it in methodical order. Meanwhile, a journal issued at Parma brought forth many articles from his pen, bearing on Biblical versions in the various languages of India. In 1860, Perreau was called to superintend the *De Rossi* collection of Oriental works in the national library at Parma. In 1876 he became sole director of the same royal library, but his devotedness to Rabbinical literature which he could now extensively gratify, dated from an earlier stage in the life of the savant. Since 1860 he has displayed his activity in that vast field of knowledge, and Zunz, Steinschneider, Halberstamm, Berliner and Neubauer, have borne testimony to the proficiency of the popular librarian not less than to his courtesy and urbanity. The illustrious Lenormant dedicated to Perreau his book on Daniel, as a token of personal esteem and gratitude.

Not many weeks ago, the Italian Journal, whose biographical notice the *Antologia* copied, thus spoke of the Abbot in connection with a mission to Modena, where he was to assign proper places to the books of the *Este*-library: "Chevalier Perreau, besides being very learned, and well known in the republic of letters, by his far-reaching publications, is a lover of the beautiful in nature and arts and is young in feelings as he is yet in age. As chief director of one of the best regulated and most elegant libraries in the kingdom—the Parma library—his suggestions about the rearrangement of that of Modena will be very valuable. It will be calculated to speed the undertaking and make it perfect."

In 1878, the subject of this article was one of the vice-Presidents of the Congress of Orientalists at Florence.

The appointment carried with it a meaning, which it seldom conveys in ordinary meetings. Rather than a title of honor it signified work; conscientious and comprehensive work. At least, so did Perreau understand it, and the writing he subsequently issued is a striking evidence of his sense of duty, while it will always stand as a monument of industry and erudition. In its pages, the Abbot offers the salient points of the first volume—thus far published—containing an account of the scholarly papers read at that Congress upon Egyptology and African languages, upon Semitic languages and Assyriology, as well as upon Arabic studies. Paying in his preface a deserved tribute to the great scholar who superintended the publication of that volume—Fausto Lasinio, the Christian who writes Hebrew like a Rabbi, and to whom the ways of Oriental learning are as familiar as the ways of Florence in which he lives and teaches—the Abbot proceeds with the synopsis of an essay descriptive of Egyptian funerals in the days of antiquity. To thinking Jews that synopsis possesses a singular attraction. It reveals the profound wisdom of Moses, in keeping silent about the nature of a hereafter, and in forbidding outward demonstrations of wild grief at the departure from earth of relatives and friends.

I would greatly wish to give an idea, however faint, of each of the twenty-five articles of Perreau on the contents of the first volume of the report of the Congress, which was held in Italy by distinguished Orientalists. For all are of interest, and surely that which discusses the geographical situation of Tyre—the Zor of our Bible—and the other which sets forth the character of the mythological Tammuz alluded to in the prophecies of Ezekiel—ought not to be passed by unnoticed. But I suppress my inclinations, lest the reader find this writing too lengthy. Still, I deem it fitting to tell how our coreligionists shone amid that galaxy of personages whose contributions are included in this volume.

Salvatore De Benedetti, widely known for his contribu-

tions to general literature, but chiefly for his "Canzoniere"—a work of rare merit on Judah ha-Levi, which incidentally throws abundant light on the poetry of the Sephardic school—read a treatise on Talmudical studies. Having fastened the attention of the august Assembly upon his arguments by his incisive logic and elegant diction, the essayist set to view the insurmountable difficulties which a rendition of the Talmud in its *Halachic*, or legal department presents. The *Aggadic*, or legendary portion, however, he highly extolled and considered perfectly translatable. And this he himself has shown in a volume he composed called "Life and death of Moses."

With our erudite Professor in the royal university at Pisa, there came our illustrious Professor at Paris. Jules Oppert discussed at length the discoveries of George Smith and explained wherein his own conclusions differ from those of the renowned English explorer. All will remember the sensation created by the unearthing of Assyrian monuments, bearing out in the main the statements of Holy Writ. Oppert pays due homage to Smith for his marvellous researches, but disagrees on many points in the rendering of the cuneiform inscriptions. That mastery of the subject which won for him the lofty position he holds in the College of France, he exhibited before that gathering of famous votaries of science.

Graziadio I. Ascoli, the archaeologist, filled up a gap in Jewish history through his deciphering of epitaphs, which date from the early ages of Christianity. He sought and found them in Italian cities. Some were traced in Greek, others in Latin; some, again, were intermingled with Hebrew names, phrases and dates, and some were altogether in Hebrew. The paper read by our Professor at Milan is of primary importance to all who study the past of our people in the country whereto Titus carried them captive.

Gustav Weil, a noted Arabist, spoke in French on a question, concerning which modern scholars are divided in opinion; that is, whether Mohammed knew how to read and write. Our Professor at Heidelberg, demonstrated

from internal evidences, drawn out of the Koran, that the founder of Islam was illiterate, and that by reason of it the book which he gave his adherents as a guide, lacks system and order. For Mohammed must have partly dictated it at intervals, but largely committed it to the memory of trusty followers.

In giving a *resume* of the writings mentioned, as well as of all the papers presented at the Congress, Perreau tells us what he himself knows on the subjects treated. For no greater mistake could be made than to consider the Abbot a mere dry mouthpiece of other persons' views. He enlivens each topic by appropriate remarks, such as only a scholar of his calibre can offer. In a signal manner, the prelate shows himself perfectly at home whenever Rabbinical literature is the theme. The latest evidence thereof is a production announced in the July number of the *Antologia Israelitica*, which magazine favors us also with the author's brief introduction. The work has for its aim the explanation of recurring abbreviations in Hebrew initials, or, as we term them, *Rashe Teboth*.<sup>1</sup> Every student of Rabbinical literature is well aware that our writers habitually employ one or two letters to indicate a whole word, and that sometimes a word curiously formed by initials stands for an entire phrase.

Perreau acknowledges the services which the encyclopedic Zunz in our days, the elder Buxtorf in former times, and others at various periods have rendered in this difficult branch of Hebrew learning. He believes, however, that the book he once began for his own use, but which, in the course of years, has grown under his hand to a considerable size, is, so far, the most complete. It is to be regretted that the Abbot was not induced to put into print a large number of copies of a compilation extremely useful, nay, indispensable to any who want to economize time in reading Rab-

<sup>1</sup> This was published in a polygraphic edition (Parma, 1883) under the title "Zeh ha-Yam ha-Gadol u-Rehab Yadayim" or "Oceano dello Abbreviature e Sigle Ebraiche, Caldaiche, Rabbiniche, Talmudiche, Cabalistiche, Geographiche" etc. with a supplement "Aharit Yam". [G]

binical compositions. Trusting that he will yet do so, and wishing the worthy prelate health to proceed in the career of high honor and usefulness he has chosen, I thank him heartily for his unremitting exertions, in behalf of the literature of my people.



## THE BIBLE AND ITALIAN LITERATURE

The frequent mention of the Sephardic liturgical poets made in these articles, recalled early days and a duty too long neglected. It brought back vividly to my mind home and friends; notably, a teacher—considered in that home a valued friend—who has won celebrity by a work on the greatest of synagogal bards. SALVATORE DE BENEDETTI wrote his "*Canzoniere*," in 1871, to elicit the respect of his countrymen for a typical Jew, whose genius towered high in the domains of truth.

Judah ha-Levi has found splendid interpreters in learned Germany. The French people also have been admirably shown by Munk a vast deal that illustrates the writings of the immortal Spaniard. An exponent in the charming language of Dante was needed, and the author of the *Canzoniere* rose equal to the arduous task. Surpassingly fitted was he for the undertaking by his thorough familiarity with Biblical and Italian literature. It is that knowledge which enabled De Benedetti to set in array the thoughts, wherein the classic writers of Italy were anticipated by the matchless poet of the Hebrews in the eleventh century. A special object sought after, was to prove how the inspiration which gave the world the "*Divina Comedia*," and that which enriched the Jewish liturgy with soul-elevating orisons, drew extensively from the same pure source; how the genius of the Florentine quaffed at the fountain of Holy Writ, and, filled with the heavenly afflatus, unconsciously breathed out sentiments, not unlike those uttered by the Jew of Toledo. A feature so strikingly new challenged the attention of both the learned and the students in Italy. They willingly read a book that mirrors forth the beauty of a life hallowed by noble aspirations, which found echo in the effusions of their own ideal poet. In reproducing for Italy what Germans had already successfully delineated, De Benedetti studied the models well

but he knew the taste of those for whom he wrote, and clothed his diction suitably. The Canzoniere is musically melodious in its prose. Judah ha-Levi has not been rhythmically rendered, but the mellifluous flow of sound runs through the one hundred and two poems therein translated. Again: a wealth of information, not accessible to many and given in the preface and the notes, enhances the worth of that excellent book. What name should have graced it but that of the Hebraist of Italy, who cast a flood of light on our liturgical poets, and who, in his love for Judah ha-Levi, searched out inedited copies of that master's sublime outpourings, and published them with illustrations?<sup>1</sup> Salvatore De Benedetti dedicated his work to the never-to-be-forgotten Luzzatto.

The little which I have now said touching a volume that I ought to have noticed at length years ago, is a tardy reparation for a sin of neglect towards a teacher and a friend. But it is not the exclusive purpose of this writing. Early last year I received from Professor De Benedetti a printed discourse which he had delivered at the opening of the scholastic term in the Royal University of Pisa. For, since 1863, that representative Israelite has filled the chair of Hebrew and kindred languages in the institution where Galileo sat and Rosellini of our days has taught. Of his learned oration when first installed into office, I have had occasion to speak at considerable length fifteen years ago in the course of a series of articles on "Italian-Hebrew Literature." For with the logical force which distinguishes my teacher of *Belles Lettres*, he vindicated in that oration the claim of the language of the Scriptures to originality, contending for its priority to Sanscrit, and highly commending its study to the youths whom he would thenceforth instruct in Semitic philology. But the discourse in the winter of 1875, took a wider range. It is most striking by reason of the novel idea which underlies it. What Salvatore De

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to S. D. Luzzatto's edition of "Betulat Bat Yehudah" extracts from the Diwan of Judah ha-Levi, edited with notes and Introduction, Prague, 1840. [G]

Benedetti did in his "Canzoniere" incidentally and to a limited degree, he now strove to accomplish directly and at great length.

Fully equipped with the requisite abilities, he started out to lead Italians on the way to find how far our Bible has influenced their literature; how strong was the impulse which poetry, history, philosophy in the classic peninsula received from the Book of books. Before entering upon the subject proper, De Benedetti took a rapid view of the contents of Holy Writ; briefly defined the nature of its diction, and quoted in his support the authority of Vincenzo Gioberti<sup>1</sup>—an Italian, short-sighted in a political horizon, but of a far-reaching intellect in Scriptural analysis. He says: "The sacred writings belong to the Orient in the boldness of tropes, in the sublimity of conceptions and imagery; but they are distinguished withal by their simplicity, by a sparing use of rhetorical ornamentation, and by the unfailing precision of ideas. For despite daring metaphors, they do not exhibit a shadow of that swelling redundancy of style, so often met in other literatures of the East, which have left their impress on this part of the globe, in the stilted eloquence of our degenerate predecessors. Thus Biblical style agrees with the Homeric, and the inspiration that flows from the two fountains—one human and the other Divine—meets and runs in perfect harmony in the Italian mind."

At this point the Professor at Pisa unfolds the history of Italian literature, showing how, when it began to wean itself from its nurturing mother—the Latin—it derived sustenance from the Bible. We are made to see the maxims of our incomparable Book of Proverbs virtually reproduced in the volumes of early authors of note. We behold Moses and the Prophets the subject of sacred representations, by which

<sup>1</sup> Vincenzo Gioberti (1801–1852) was an Italian philosopher, and politician. He was an ordained Catholic priest, but was strongly influenced by Mazzini. For a time he taught philosophy at Brussels, but later entered politics and was elected to the House of Deputies. He was entrusted with the formation of a new ministry in 1848. [G]

the Church endeavored to entertain and edify its adherents.

Coming down to the thirteenth century, De Benedetti takes special delight in drawing a comparison between Holy Writ, in the history of its commentaries, and the unique poem of the greatest Italian. For in like manner as the sacred volumes justly became the study of the deepest thinkers, who interpreted and elucidated it in innumerable ways, so was the *Divina Comedia*, the object of countless illustrations and expositions. But Salvatore De Benedetti is an Israelite and as he loves the Hebrew Scriptures, he dwells on a circumstance which he deems an additional glory to the books that Jews revere. To him Dante is "a Biblical writer." Not alone by reason of a frequent similarity of style discovered between the productions of the great Italian and those of our prophets, but because of the object which the immortal Alighieri sought to reach. Our preachers of old did not stop to round their periods. They let the fire of a heavenly zeal burst forth to consume sin and to enkindle the hearts of men with devotion to virtue. Dante also bade his genius become a scourge to the wicked and a solace to the upright. But even as the heralds of God's word suffered in their endeavors to hold the standard of truth aloft, so did Dante endure contumely for his loyalty to principle. Our plaintive Jeremiah, foretelling the doom of a wretched prince, asked us not to weep for the dead, but to shed scalding tears for the unhappy mortal that must leave, nor come again to see, the country of his birth. In similar strain, Dante poured forth lamentations at the fate which had made him an exile.

I cannot follow De Benedetti in his graphic description of the visions wherein Dante approaches our heaven-illuminated seers; nor that of the allegories which Alighieri borrowed from the grandest of books. To do the professor justice, I would be compelled to exchange the pleasing office of reviewer for the less congenial one of translator. With a marvellous erudition the lecturer traces in Dante's poetical and prose writings, Job, David, Isaiah, Joel, Daniel; he marks out the conceptions, the expressions, the very words of men who

live eternally in the eternal volumes. De Benedetti denies that Virgil alone, whom Dante calls his master and his guide, molded "the style which for its beauty into favor exalted" Alighieri. The Hebrew Scriptures, singularly ingenuous and incisive, entered largely into the composition of the mind that brought forth literary creations most stupendous.

Petrarch, who embalmed chaste love in sweet stanzas, found in Holy Writ his fragrant ointments. The laurelled poet declared in his autobiography that he "delighted in the sacred writings." When he cries, "No swallow was e'er so lonely on a roof as I abide" our minds instinctively recall the lament of the afflicted in the Psalter: "I am a solitary bird upon the housetop."

The lecturer deprecates a visible decline of taste for Biblical writings from the days of Petrarch to later ages. Surveying the field of Italian letters, he perceives a healthy growth where the Bible has scattered its seeds, and rank weeds, when it has not been at work. He extols Metastasio—the prolific author of the last century,—whose collection of moral sentences, teems with scriptural sentiments in simple rhymes of artless beauty. Of those in our age, who have intensely realized the magnificence of Israel's poesy, De Benedetti cites two, preeminently great. Monti, who wrote that "if Homer is the prince of poets, David is their king"; Monti, who in thrilling accents paraphrased Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones, and Manzoni, whom none among his contemporaries exceeded in the gift of clothing lofty thoughts in the ingenuous simplicity of the inspired book.

So writes Salvatore De Benedetti: "In Dante, and in Manzoni, the influence of Biblical poetry is most clearly manifest. We will repeat it. The character of that poetry which led those great ones to choose it above all others, is a manly simplicity—a simplicity which to follow is to temper and correct art and fiction bordering close upon falsity; defects into which not rarely have they fallen, who cling absolutely to the classical style. We look on Biblical poetry as on a mountainous region with pure air and spon-



taneous vegetation. Thither man with health broken by a corrupt city life goes to recover. Its simplicity and strength are the issue of the religious and moral ideal underlying it—an ideal which permeates thought, affection, life.”

It is due to a friend and teacher, that I shall add a few words to the foregoing review. Previous to his elevation to the Chair he honorably fills, Salvatore De Benedetti had published lectures, pamphlets and *critiques*, but since he has occupied his present position in the royal University at Pisa, the professor has contributed articles on the history of the Kazars and other subjects,—the last work from his pen being “The Life and Death of Moses,” predicated upon Rabbinical legends.

## AN OLD RITUAL

In an article contributed about eight years ago to an interesting publication, which has since been discontinued, I gave a few specimens of the nature of the Italo-Jewish liturgy (*Minhag Italiani*). I wished to correct a mistake into which Israelites, otherwise well-informed, have frequently fallen. They have believed that all Italian Jews follow the Sephardic (Spanish-Portuguese) ritual, and differ from this, at times, only in the choice and length of Prophetic sections (Haftaroth), as marked out in some Hebrew Bibles. That the impression is erroneous, I will endeavor further to show by the observations which I am about to offer.

In the pronunciation of the Hebrew, Italian Jews agree in the main, though not altogether, with the Portuguese, but they possess a ritual of their own, as distinct from that of the latter as from that of the Ashkenazim (German-Polish). It is unnecessary to say, that respecting the prayers, attributed to "the Men of the Great Assembly," and their supplications of a confessedly very ancient date, the Italian liturgy presents few variations from the universally accepted formula. The wording of the *Kaddish*, corresponds almost precisely to the Ashkenazic, but in the whole internal arrangement, the *Machzor* or *Siddur* (successive order of prayers), stands by itself. In several instances it is rather longer than either the Portuguese or German, but it is not unlike the last-named, in the multiplicity of poetical effusions (*Piyutim*) for special Sabbaths, holidays and semi-holidays. Those effusions have emanated mainly from Italian Rabbis, who, at times, could rise to sublimity of thought and diction, but who seldom soared so loftily as the liturgical Hebrew poets of Spain and Portugal. These great masters also have now and then a conspicuous place in the Italian ritual, and so has the famous Kalir—obscure

in his learned allusions to Talmudical teachings and legendary tales, and in his strangely-constructed diction.

Noteworthy is the circumstance that in the Italian as in the German Machzor, will be met several poems of the most illustrious among men of the Sephardic school, which are not found in the Portuguese Machzor. It is a cause of regret that the heart-touching "Ziyon," of Judah ha-Levi, was not inserted among the elegies recited by Portuguese Jews, on the Ninth of Ab, and that the inspiring apostrophe to the soul, (*Barechi Nafshi*), by Bachya, did not receive the position, it preeminently deserves, in the Portuguese ritual for the Day of Atonement. None will imagine for a moment, that the omission is due to the previous closing of the Machzor, for, to suppose it, would be to have forgotten history. A study of the subject will disclose the fact that additions have been made even in late ages in all existing rituals. Local rabbis and scholarly readers (*Ilazzanim*) responding to pious emotions, would indite special invocations, which were by degrees embodied in the respective prayer books. Thus they swelled to a large size, as evidenced by the Italian ritual.

To tell with precision when the latter began to make room for poetical pieces (*Piyutim*) would be very difficult, but we may accept as authority what Luzzatto writes in his *Mabo* (Introduction) to the Italian Machzor.<sup>1</sup> Over a thousand years ago, Jews in the peninsula expressed the religious feelings which stirred within their breasts, by poems breathing profound devotion. To allow such poems a place in the ancient liturgy, was not unprecedented, for, without entering into the vexed question of the period of the famous Kalir,<sup>2</sup> we learn from Saadya Gaon, of the tenth century, that "early Rabbis were wont to recite on the Day of Atonement," certain compositions fitting the solemn occasion.

The "Machzor of Rome"—which is one of the names

<sup>1</sup> Leghorn, 1856. [G]

<sup>2</sup> See p. 154. [G]

given to the Italian liturgy—issued from the press before all others; for the Soncino family, who deserve well of posterity, printed it in 1485.<sup>1</sup> It largely prevails in Italy, but nowhere else has it any hold, except in two small Synagogues at Salonica. All are aware that in Europe the Ashkenazic Machzor is followed by the majority of our people; in Asia and Africa, the Sephardic. Still that circumstance has not prevented the acceptance by all, of compositions from writers belonging to any of those three principal rituals. Thus it has happened that the elegy *Eleh Ezkerah*, (unhistorically representing the martyrdom of the ten sages), whose author appears to have been a German, was admitted in all rituals; so was the acrostic poem *Lecha Dodi*, introductory of the Friday evening service, written by one following the Portuguese minhag; and so was likewise the universally known *Yigdal*, that condensation of Maimonides' thirteen articles of the Jewish faith which in all likelihood proceeded from an Italian Rabbi. The conjecture that Maimonides was also the writer of that poem, has met with reasonable disfavor. Again a theory was once held that the last verse ingeniously reveals the name of "Yehiel Baruch," its supposed author; but Luzzatto in his *Mabo* to the Italian Machzor, tells us: "I have seen a parchment manuscript of the Roman ritual, prepared in the year 5143 (1383). It belongs to Almanzi. The scribe, called Moses ben Jekuthiel Hefez, of the Zichron family, wrote it by order of Daniel, son of the physician, Samuel Dayan. The following inscription is placed as a heading over *Yigdal*: 'These are the thirteen articles of our faith as arranged by my grandfather Daniel, son of Judah Dayan, of blessed memory.'" The same inscription exists on a transcript of *Yigdal*, found in a parchment copy of the Pentateuch at Venice, and as the poem *Adon 'Olam* immediately follows, Luzzatto inclines to think that the last named composition also proceeded from

<sup>1</sup> The first volume was printed in 1485 and the second volume in 1486. A second edition of the Machzor of Rome was issued from the same printing press in 1495, indicating the great popularity which the first edition must have enjoyed. [G]

Italy. It were desirable to compare other effusions of the elder Daniel Dayan with the *Yigdal*, and judge as to his claim to the title of poet, but the Machzor has none from his pen. The most extensive contributor seems to have been a Rabbi Benjamin of Rome, whom Zunz recognizes as a contemporary of the celebrated Meir of Rothenburg—flourishing towards the end of the thirteenth century. He enriched the Italian ritual with writings, which not infrequently exhibit a flowing and elevated style. A free translation of a sentence may possibly serve as an illustration. Thus begins a prayer for the conclusion of a Kippur service: "Ere the sun shall again enter his chamber, and lie hid beneath his canopy, let O Lord! sin quickly depart, and forgiveness cover up Thy people's failings. From morn to eve have they turned as suppliants to Thy Oracle. Oh! pay the guerdon of a whole day's humiliation; let not the sun go down and see it pass unrewarded."

Speaking of the Day of Atonement, a peculiarity in the Italian Machzor is worth noticing. The *Kol Nidre* appears there in Hebrew, instead of Chaldaic; nor is the wording exactly equivalent to that current among Sephardim or Ashkenazim. However, that is not the only singularity striking the reader of the first published Hebrew liturgy. How incalculably beneficial a searching into the character of every liturgy, with a view to improve, abridge and unify the Jewish service would be, all who love Israel understand. In Italy, as far as the writer of this article could ascertain, the variety of rituals has not created a division of hearts, but how very mischievous it has proved, and still continues to prove in other countries!

America might have offered a model, which the Jewish world would have striven to copy; but, she has infinitely added to an existing evil. Prayer books bearing the mark of individual whims, ignoring the eventful past, disregarding the God-inspired yearning for the fulfilment of a glorious future; books often incorrect in diction, oftener faulty in logic have multiplied to a most painful degree. Admit that the Portuguese ritual—in more than one sense, unsurpassed—



becomes objectionable to some by reason of its length and repetitions; the German is burdened with writings which time has tendered incomprehensible; the Italian presents in a measure the identical defect. But from all of them—and from printed and inedited compositions scattered through our rich literature—a Machzor might be formulated, pure in language, soul-exalting in sentiments, thoroughly Jewish, yet varied and acceptably simplified<sup>1</sup>.

The great Luzzatto, whom I have necessarily consulted in preparing this outline of a far-reaching subject, thus concludes the *Mabo*, or "Introduction", to which I have referred above: "It is well known that our predecessors frequently changed liturgical poems, dropping the old to seize the new. Should we exchange and select and put an end to ritual differences, which have bred abundant harm; should we unite in praying to God and thanking His name in the same manner and style; should our poetical outpourings be the very choicest of those written of old in all the places of our dispersion, I think that our ancient authors from the heavens where they are sphered, would say: 'Good is your design, excellently directed; pleasing to the Lord is your union. Oh! may the Lord grant His people strength; may the Lord bless His people with peace.'"

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Morais was favorably inclined towards a revision of the liturgy and as early as 1867 he urged a uniform ritual for American Jews in a series of articles in the *Jewish Messenger* of New York, and later he wrote a series of articles for the *Jewish Record*, of Philadelphia, urging the convocation of a Synod for the revision of the liturgy. It is interesting to note that with all his devotion to the Sephardic ritual and his great filial piety and affection for it, he was willing to have the Ashkenazic form of service become the standard ritual, if the Piyyutim were eliminated. [G]

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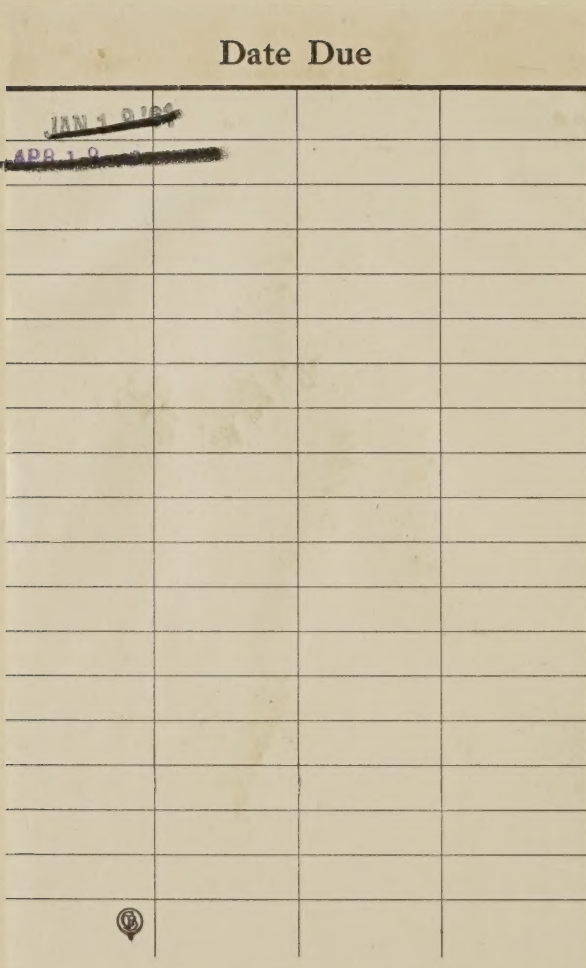
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